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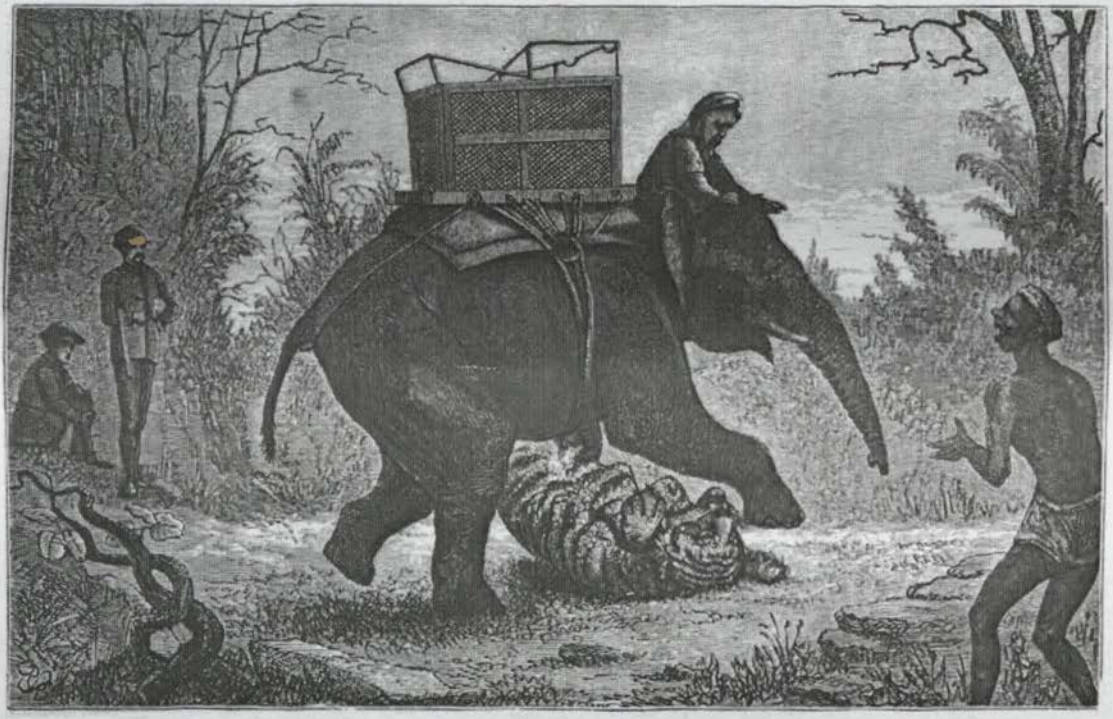
LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET



BUSSUNTA'S REVENGE.

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SEONEE

OR

CAMP LIFE ON THE SATPURA RANGE

A TALE OF INDIAN ADVENTURE

BY

ROBERT ARMITAGE STERNDALE, F.R.G.S.

Illustrated by the Author

WITH A MAP
and
AN APPENDIX CONTAINING A BRIEF TOPOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE DISTRICT OF SEONEE IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES OF INDIA

SECOND EDITION

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188 FLEET STREET
1877

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PREFACE.

I HAVE BEEN ASKED why I have adopted the form in which this narrative of Indian life appears, instead of treating the subject in the first person, the incidents all being personal experiences of my own and my friends.

I had several motives for so doing.

For the sake of making the book more interesting to my youthful readers; to enable me to impart much information in a pleasant colloquial manner, without the pedantry which might have been too obtrusive in an egotistical narration; and, finally, to allow me to select from a mass of notes, jotted down at various times, those cases only which exhibited certain peculiarities in the animals concerned, and to arrange them in such a way as to carry the reader month by month through the successive seasons of the year.

I had no intention, when I took up my pen, of writing for the veteran sportsman, though I dare say there are many bits in the following pages—notices of birds and plants and insects, and traits of animal character—that will recall fond memories of the past to many an old shikaree. My book is written chiefly for younger followers of Saint Hubert, whether they be bound for India or not, and my aim throughout has

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been to inculcate a love for nature, and to make secondary to it the mere destroying of wild beasts.

The European characters have been created for the work, but the natives are real beings. Some of my readers will not only recognise the scenes, but will remember old Sheykha, Soma the Lebhana, and my old follower the Lalla. The death of the latter by a tiger has been vividly described by Captain Forsyth in his 'Highlands of Central India,' though the story of his life is incorrect; the true account will be found in the Notes at the end of this volume. In the nomenclature of the birds and mammals I have followed Dr. Jerdon, an old friend and encourager of the natural history proclivities of my youthful days. For the botany Roxburgh's 'Flora Indica,' Voight's 'Hortus Suburbanus Calcuttensis,' and Balfour's 'Trees of India,' have been my authorities.

The legend of Taj Khan illustrates the superstitious customs of the Mahomedans, who are firm believers in witchcraft and the raising and casting out of devils. The Lalla's story is a sample of the art of the Hindoo *improvisatore*.

A short topographical and historical account of the district appears in the Appendix.

ROBERT A. STERNDALE.

THAMES DITTON: *March* 1877.

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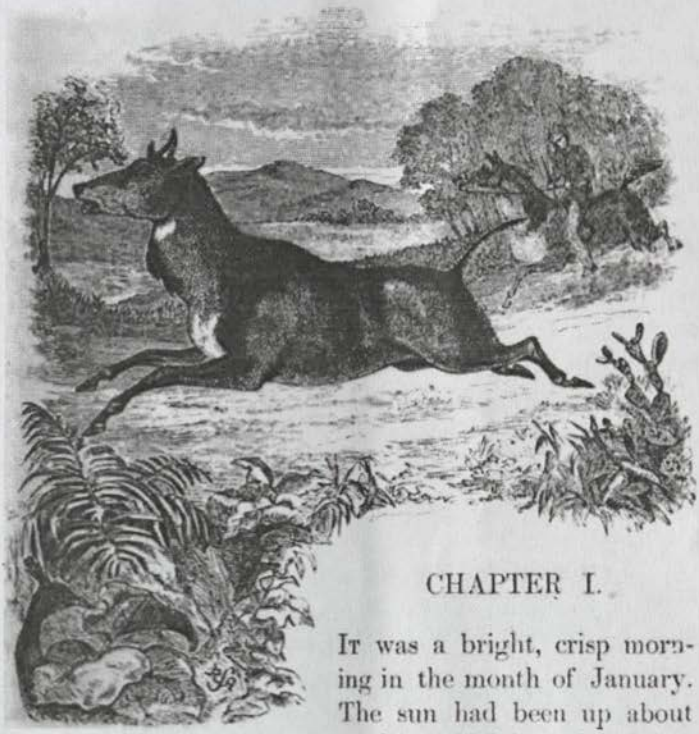

CHAPTER I.

It was a bright, crisp morning in the month of January. The sun had been up about an hour, driving the mists from the valleys and bathing the whole landscape in a flood of light. The air was cold and bracing—more so than it usually is in the plains of India, even in the cold season. When we say the *plains* of India, the term is used in contradistinction to those mountain ranges which are commonly known as 'The Hills.' India is intersected by other ranges of lesser grandeur, whose plateaux, elevated above the sea some 2000 or 3000 feet, have a cooler range of temperature than the low levels of the true plains. Of all these highlands, the Highlands of Central India—so termed by an old friend and fellow-sportsman, now gone to his rest, in his faithful

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account of them—are the most enjoyable to the hunter and the naturalist. The lordly bison haunts the bamboo-clad slopes of the Satpura range, and interferes not with his unwieldy neighbour and cousin the buffalo, who keeps to his grass-grown plains. The red deer herd in the fertile valleys watered by the Halone and the Bunjur; the sambur and the axis, the stately blue bull and the tiny, toy-like, mouse deer, all have their haunts in the forests that are spread over the undulating plateaux. There are the rocky ravines for the bears, and the stony plains haunted by antelope and bustard. The grim tiger roams over thousands of square miles, and the stealthy panther scruples not to carry off his prey even from the heart of a station.

Since the time of which we write, the axe and the plough have been steadily eating into the vast solitudes; but there are still thousands of square miles of forest-land which never will, and never can, be cleared—extensive beds of laterite and piles of trap boulders which, though bearing a dense covering of timber and underwood, are undisturbed by human hands unless for the excavation, here and there, of iron ore. Thus cover will always remain for wild animals, which find refuge during the day in the thickets, from whence they emerge at night to lay waste the growing crops, or attack the stragglers of the homeward-wending herds.

It is in the district of Seonee,—which forms a portion of these high table-lands formed by the Satpura range of which we have been speaking,—that we would place our reader on that bright January morning. The road, or rather path, for it was little else, had led over a gentle rise composed of red laterite, which when worn by the feet of men and cattle had all the appearance of a made gravel walk in a shrubbery, being fringed by a variety of bushes.

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For a mile or two it had been thickly wooded as the traveller passes through a belt of salai[1] forest—a peculiar, aromatic, but rather worthless tree—but now it emerged on a broad low valley, down the centre of which ran a small brook, dotted here and there with clumps of butea[2] and grislea[3] bushes. On the other side another gentle slope was covered with thick scrub, over which the morning mists were slowly floating off.

The air was full of the songs of birds and the discordant cries of the peafowl and painted partridge. One old peacock was strutting about the grassy glades, spreading out his gorgeous plumes to the morning sun, whilst three or four more sober-coloured peahens ran about, fussily looking for tit-bits. Now and then a flock of green parroquets flew over, each one trying to outscream the rest; and occasionally a rocket-bird would glide across the open space between the two belts of wood, his long tail streaming like a white riband after him.

But what makes the peacock suddenly lower his train, and his dusky wives to glide rapidly into cover? Over the swell of the ground at the head of the valley dashes at full speed a noble blue bull: straining every nerve, with labouring breath and distended nostrils, with heaving flanks, that seem jet-black as the perspiration streams down his side, he dashes headlong down the grassy slope. A few yards behind pressed a horseman at the same reckless pace, and it was evident that the stride of his charger was too much for the pursued. As the crest of the hill was passed the rider, pressing his horse's flanks, urged him to a final rush, and, ranging up alongside the bull, the sharp crack of a rifle rang through the stillness

[1] *Boswellia thurifera.* [2] *Butea frondosa.*
[3] *Grislea tomentosa.*

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of the glen. The nylghau staggered, but bravely held on. Another sharp report and he plunged heavily on his head, driving his short, pointed horns deep into the turf. The impetus of the horseman carried him a few yards beyond, when, wheeling sharp round, he sprang off by the side of his quarry.

The first glance the hunter gave at the dying bull was one of mingled satisfaction and pity; his eyes flashed with pride at the well-placed shots, but a sadder expression came over them as they met the glazing orbs of the animal. He turned away to loosen his horse's girths, muttering to himself—'Those lazy loons will lose their meat if they don't run harder than they did at first.'

The bull lay in the stillness of death as he cast one more look at it, before proceeding to caress his reeking steed. It was a golden-chesnut Arab, promising great speed, sinewy and hard as nails; not an ounce of superfluous fat. His faulty point was his head, as far as good looks were concerned; he lacked the Arab, deer-like head, so much admired. It was rather coarse and heavy, but he had an honest brown eye, and, as his master would proudly observe, little fault was to be found with the rest of him.

Casting the bridle over his arm so as to let his favourite crop the dewy grass, the master sat down upon a trap boulder which cropped up out of the turf. About a yard from his feet lay the dead nylghau.

'Poor brute!' he softly said to himself, 'you had a sharp tussle for it; but I gave you every chance. I might have shot you down standing where we first came upon you, but I gave you a run for your life; not much chance though with Cossack at your heels. I wish those lazy fellows would run up, however,' he continued, scanning the landscape; 'they will lose their meat, and serve

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them right. There will be a meal in every Gond's hut in the village, and all the more for the loss to the squeamish Mahomedans. I wanted some marrow-bones, too, for to-night's dinner. There's that boy coming out, and tough chicken is hardly the hunter's fare he expects. Ah! here comes Nusseer Khan at last.' A shrill peal from the master's dog-whistle directed the panting runner, who had just paused on the crest of the slope, to the spot where the group was. The sight of the dead bull stirred the man's blood, and, waving his hand with a shout to his comrades behind, he bounded down the valley.

'Now, Nusseer Khan, look sharp,' said his master, pointing to the nylghau.

The man drew a long Lahore knife from his girdle as he bent over the animal. 'It is too late,' he muttered, shaking his head; 'his breath is gone out of him.'

'What of that?' impatiently exclaimed the Englishman. 'I know more of the Book than you people do; if blood follows the knife it is fit—it is no matter. Cut and lose no more time.'

Murmuring the appointed prayer, the Pathan drew the heavy blade across the bull's throat, and looked incredulously at the crimson stream as it sank into the moist earth.

By this time two other men, breathless with hard running, arrived, one a Pathan like Nusseer Khan, stalwart and fair-complexioned, the other a Gond, or aboriginal dweller of the country, short in stature, dark as a negro in colour, and somewhat negritic in type, as far as curly hair, broad nose, and high cheek-bones are concerned.

The denizen of the jungle came forward with a grin from ear to ear, as he foresaw a plenteous feast of meat that evening; no scruples of conscience afflicted him as

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to whether the beast was properly killed according to the Mosaic and Mahomedan laws, whether 'the blood thereof which is the life thereof' had been let in proper manner, with the customary invocation; omnivorous, and by no means fastidious, his mouth watered at the thought of broiled collops.

Leaving the Gond and the second Pathan to make arrangements for bringing the bull into camp, the Englishman tightened his horse's girths and, mounting, rode slowly off, followed by Nusseer Khan carrying his master's rifle.

Major Fordham, our successful rider, was a tall, spare man, wiry, and bronzed with much exposure. He seemed about forty, had a mild grey eye, a pleasant, smiling mouth, shaded by a heavy grey moustache, and a quiet, low voice. He had the character of being a studious man, more of a naturalist than a shikaree; but in this case popular opinion was wrong. If he was solitary in his habits, objecting to jovial hunting parties, it was because mere killing had no charm for him, and emulation was distasteful; he never bragged of his own exploits, and so he lost much credit as a mighty hunter. His aim was deadly, his seat on a horse was sure; perhaps he was a little over-cautious, but his coolness and courage in difficulties were known to the native shikarees of the place more than to the residents of the station. The natives used to say of his gun that it was his *gholam*, or slave. For real jungle-knowledge concerning the habits of animals, skill in tracking, and reading the many signs essential to perfect woodcraft, he was far superior to many a more noted sportsman of his race. As a rule English sportsmen do not attain to the pitch arrived at by the native; they are fearless, hard-hitting, straightforward Nimrods, ready to ride down, spear, or shoot

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anything that is put before them. Compared with the lithe native they are indifferent stalkers. They cannot lie or sit for hours in a cramped position, nor does the bent twig or cropped blade of grass catch their eyes as they stride along the jungle path. We do not wish to decry our brethren, but we think they might learn more from the native than they do; but it requires a special aptitude, quick sight, habitually observant nature, and unvarying patience—all these are necessary, and as they are exercised these faculties get stronger and stronger, till it becomes a second nature to a man to let nothing escape his notice.

Fordham was one of the few who had exercised these gifts, and he was little inferior to Jeythoo, the bison tracker of Sonawani, to whom in due time we will introduce the reader, whose wonderful powers of following up a trail quite equalled what Cooper tells us in his thrilling tales of the feats of the Red Indians. Fordham's fondness for this kind of woodcraft had been in no small degree fostered in his youth by those very tales, and also by memoirs and traditions in his family, one of his ancestors having seceded in the War of Independence, and attained eminence under Washington. Many were the hours spent in his boyish days trying to hurl the tomahawk or dart the knife like the heroic Delawares, and, we must confess, with but indifferent success. Instead of sleeping quietly in his bed like other good boys of his age, he would drop out of his window, and roll himself up in a blanket under a low branching yew tree in the garden, greatly to the disgust of sundry cats who had made it a favourite trysting-place. Therefore when he came to years of greater discretion, and found himself his own master to a certain extent, and within reach of the forests he longed for in his boyhood, he entered

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thoroughly into the enjoyment of a hunter's life, spending days and nights out in the jungles, whenever he could get leave from his regiment. Scorning luxuries, he went in for roughing it, and rather overdid it at first, till a few severe bouts of jungle fever somewhat restrained him. Then the Punjaub campaign of '48 took him to more stirring scenes, after which, through the influence of some friends who were interested in him, he was given a staff appointment, and, at the time of which we write, he was holding a special post which enabled him to remain nine months out of the year in camp, and to carry out his favourite pursuits.

He was now expecting a young friend to join him, who had lately landed in India.

'Nusseer Khan, was the mare taken out to Mohgaon?' asked his master, who had ridden slowly about a mile towards his camp, which could now be seen in the far distance, the white tents showing like specks against the dark foliage of a mango grove. 'Was the mare taken out to Mohgaon, and the brown Cabul to Piperia for the *chota sahib*?'

'Yes, my lord, your slave himself saw them off.'

'And did you send a Sowar with them to show the sahib the way across country?'

'Azim Khan went, protector of the poor.'

''Tis well,' replied Fordham, taking a glance upwards at the sun. 'The boy ought to be in camp by this time if he started at the crow's dawn.'

The crow's dawn is an expressive native term for the dark hour just before the first streak of grey in the eastern sky, when those sagacious birds seem to know that daybreak is at hand, and commence a vigorous cawing as if to stir up the lazy ones, who may feel inclined to tuck a sleepy head under a wing once more.

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As the sun was beginning to get warm Fordham ordered his attendant to come on leisurely, whilst he, giving rein to his horse, cantered off in the direction of the camp. A long stretch of rice fields lay between him and the tents. Here and there was a large tank studded at this time of the year with innumerable wild fowl. As he cleared a low *bund*, or mud embankment dividing two fields, he startled a large flock of grey geese, which flew off with discordant cries.

Over another *bund*, and he shook his fist laughingly at a grey fox, which darted from under his horse's feet. The little rascal had been cautiously stalking the geese, and might have secured one had his little game not been spoiled by Cossack's thundering hoofs, as he bounded over the hard soil in a manner which showed that his run of the morning had not much affected his spirits.

A few more fields. A gentle declivity with a sandy bottom, which served as a watercourse in the rainy season; a slope of turf, then a grove of huge, gnarled, old mango trees, and the horseman pulled up his snorting Arab at the door of a large single-pole tent.

At a little distance another smoking steed was being rubbed down by a native groom or syce, whilst a dismounted trooper stood at his horse's head waiting to make his report. Seeing these signs of his friend's arrival, Fordham threw his reins to a bystander, and was soon welcoming to tent-life a slim young Englishman, whose fresh complexion showed that an Indian sun had not as yet had time to turn the roses of the old country into tan.

The two men had mutual friends at home, and the younger one soon got over a certain amount of restraint which he could not help feeling at first at the other's superior age and position, and, whilst their baths were

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being prepared, they were deep in an animated conversation. Fordham's manner was so free from affectation of any kind that he seldom failed to make the most timid at home in a very short time, and he noted with pleasure that his young companion was also devoid of that worthless lacquer which young men so often think passes for sterling gold, and with which they hide the natural complexion of their nature.

Nothing is more to be admired than a young man, honest and open-hearted, just beginning life with all the ardent hopes and sanguine nature of youth; fresh and enthusiastic, willing, and not too proud to learn from those of greater experience, and straightforward in all things. And, on the other hand, nothing is more to be deplored, than to see a similar youth aged beyond his years, hipped and *blasé*, a wretched counterfeit of an old *roué*, who thinks he is up to a trick or two, in his own miserable parlance, and who considers it weak to show any natural freshness whatever.

There was a striking contrast between Fordham and Ernest Milford in dress. The elder was clad in a close-fitting suit of stout drill, dyed with the barks of the mango and babool trees to the true shikar colour, a sort of olive greenish-brown; the shoulders were protected by pieces of leather to bear the friction of the rifle; leather-lined pockets in front held a small powder flask, caps, and balls, sewed up in greased cloth—for these were the days before the common use of breech-loaders; a *kookrie* or Ghoorka knife, an awkward-looking but favourite weapon of Fordham's, and a short-bladed, straight, double-edged dagger were attached to a broad belt of sambur leather; leggings of the same material completed his attire, which savoured more of the backwoods than of civilisation, and formed a dingy contrast to the modern-cut shooting-coat,

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buckskin breeches, and highly varnished boots of his younger companion.

A servant approaches to tell them their baths are ready; so let us leave them for a while and look about the camp.

The mango grove was on the borders of a noble tank, and was for some distance surrounded by a cultivated plain, beyond which rose a range of blue hills. A little to the right, nestled amongst trees, was a large native village, inhabited by an industrious and skilful race of cultivators called Ponwars, but a litigious, untrustworthy set, much given to removing, if they could, their neighbours' landmarks, and delighting in the incessant law-suits arising therefrom. A few miles on the left the smoke rose from another large village owned by a Pathan, and colonized by that more stalwart people. They were descendants of the Pathans who invaded the country in the armies of the emperors of Delhi, and who acquired lands in virtue of conquest, and when, about A.D. 1700, the district of Seonee was ceded by the ruling prince of the Raj Gond dynasty, Narendra Sa, to Bukht Boolund, the Raja of Deogurh, a Pathan adventurer, named Taj Khan, so distinguished himself before the latter by slaying a bear with his sword that he gave him a command of horse, and afterwards the *talooqa*, or division of Doongertāl, where he built a fort, of which the ruins still remain. Taj Khan's descendants soon spread themselves over the place, and one of them now held the village to our left, from whence he kept up an active quarrel with his Ponwar neighbour on the old subject of a disputed boundary, the ins and outs of which Fordham was now trying to unravel.

The camp within the mango grove was an animated scene, from the various groups of which it was composed.

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First there were four tents of sorts. The two larger ones for Fordham's special use, round which clustered numerous servants in neat attire. Then there was a tent for his office-people, and a fourth, consisting merely of two uprights, a ridge pole, and a cloth stretched over it, for the use of the Sepoy guard which escorted his camp, and in front of which paced a sentry guarding the piled arms. The Sepoys themselves were mostly away in a corner where the village dealers had opened an impromptu shop of groceries of various kinds, and were bargaining for the materials of which they make their frugal meals. Some of them were already hard at work making their flour into dough, and then roasting their flat cakes on round iron plates, whilst a little pot of dāl—a kind of pulse—was simmering away beside the fire.

Beyond the *bunniah's* shop was a group of camels, most of them lying down ruminating after their morning's work. Further to the left was a fine female elephant, lazily fanning herself with a branch, whilst her keepers were busily preparing cakes similar to those of the Sepoys, only four times the size, which were intended for her special benefit, her allowance being thirty pounds of flour daily, with half-a-pound of *ghee* and half-a-pound of treacle to supply the place of butter and jam; besides which she was allowed as much as she could eat of grass, succulent branches, and millet stalks. So on the whole she was about the best treated of all the four-footed members of the camp.

At some distance from the elephant were picketed two rows of horses—four of them in the front rank, from their superior accoutrements as well as appearance, were easily to be recognised as Fordham's; the other four belonged to his mounted orderlies. In those days district officials were more liberally supplied with attendance than

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they are now. Having made the round of the camp, passing a small tent, from which a savoury smell and sounds of hissing frying-pans issuing told that it was the kitchen, we find ourselves again in front of the principal tent door. A large white dog of the common Pariah breed, but in better condition than most of his species, stood licking his lips as each dish was carried in by the *khidmutgars* and placed on the breakfast table. He knew his place better than to go in till his master called him—not that Fordham was his master beyond being master of the whole camp; Bhoora's legitimate owner was a camel-driver, but the dog, having shown marvellous sagacity in tracking wounded deer on one or two occasions, was taken notice of by Fordham, and always at meals was allowed a bone from the major's table.

Breakfast having been served, and the two Englishmen having bathed and changed their attire, they set to work with hunters' appetites. Omelettes and khichree—a favourite Indian dish of rice and pulse, boiled together with savoury spices, and served up with butter and fried onions—dry curries, a round of cold corned beef, potted wild duck, eggs, toast and *chuppatties*—a species of thin flour cake, or scone, baked on an iron plate, something like what we have seen the Sepoys making, only thinner; various kinds of jams completed a meal to which ample justice was done.

'What will you drink, Milford?' asked his host.

'Oh, tea, please,' rejoined the other, laughing. 'I have not got over my English habits yet, and could not fancy beer and claret, as all the others did in the station.'

'I am very glad to hear it. I always take tea myself. If those fellows in the station would only drop beer in the mornings and take more exercise, we should hear less of

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liver complaint among them. By the bye, I have forgotten old "Bhoora" and the cats too. Here, "tit, tit, tit!" there now, what do you think of those?' he continued, as two beautiful little spotted cats came racing down from their resting-place on the inner canvas roof of the tent, and began rubbing themselves against his legs, and mewing for food. They were beautifully shaped, like miniature leopards—greyish in colour, with black spots, white chest and belly, with large black bands and splashes, and narrow stripes of black, white, and tan down the forehead.

'What splendid little fellows!' exclaimed Milford; 'what are they?'

'A species of Pardine cat, called by naturalists *Felis rubiginosa*. They were brought to me when very young by a Gond shikaree, as I am known throughout the district as a collector of animals. At first they were savage, but they gradually got tamer. Even now they will not let me handle them, although they both, and one especially, will lie in my lap for hours whilst I am reading or writing. They never leave the tents, and at night sleep in a basket, in which they are carried from stage to stage. You will see them by-and-by playing, and will marvel at their agility, which far exceeds that of the common cat. Here, Bhoora, old boy, here is a bone for you. Now, Milford, I must do some office work, and, if you can amuse yourself in the mean time, we will go out at four in the afternoon and see if we can beat a hog out of the cane fields beyond the village.'

'Well, if you will allow me to take a book and sit quietly in a corner of your office tent, I should like to see how you go on; it will be a novelty to me, whose only notions of a court of justice are connected with bewigged and gowned judges and barristers.'

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'Ah, we don't sport wigs and gowns in the jungles,' rejoined his companion, laughing, 'but I think we mete out as good justice, if not better, in our rough way; we have no intervention of attorneys and barristers; the parties concerned plead their own causes, and bring up their own witnesses. However, come along and see for yourself.'

To an adjoining tent the two Englishmen adjourned. Milford chose an easy arm-chair in a corner, where he pretended to read, whilst Fordham took possession of a small table placed nearly in front of one door. Behind his chair stood a venerable old jemadar of chapprassies, or chief of the orderlies, a grey-bearded old Pathan, with snow-white turban with a gold band across it, blue cloth tunic and crimson shawl round his waist, in which was conspicuously thrust a handsome silver-mounted, ivory-handled Lahore knife, the badge of his rank. Behind him again stood two ordinary chapprassies, dressed in similar uniform but of inferior quality, and instead of the dagger they wore an engraved brass-plate, with the name of the office to which they belonged.

Two natives now entered, and, making a low *salaam* to Major Fordham, sat down, one on each side; one was a Mahomedan, stout and black-bearded, and with an air of considerable dignity and self-importance. This was the *serishtadar*, or native secretary of the office, a personage of no small consequence. His rival (in many ways) on the other side was a sharp-faced Hindoo, meaner in appearance, much marked with small-pox, and very obsequious and insinuating in his manner. Milford, as he looked at him, thought him a most untrustworthy man, and set him down as a rogue at once; thinking the serishtadar rather a fine fellow: so much for appearances. As neither character will figure in our pages again we

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may as well say that the portly serishtadar was, if possible, the greater rascal of the two, and both of them were commonly supposed to fatten on ill-gotten gains—a state of things which the utmost vigilance on the part of the European district officers was powerless to prevent. Each man was accompanied by a clerk, and a *peon* carrying a large bundle of papers tied up in a red cloth. The Hindoo, who was the *nazir*, or financial secretary and accountant, opened his bundle, took out a paper, and, receiving a nod from his master, began in a very wheezy voice, that seemed to filter through a layer of cotton wool, to read a paper written in Hindi. Fordham listened, and rapidly gave some orders. The nazir passed the paper over to the clerk behind him, who entered the instructions on a corner of the document.

The serishtadar now produced a lengthy report in the Persian character, which he read in sonorous tones, rocking his body to and fro, and reading as much as could be done at a time in one breath, regardless of stops, when with a deep inspiration he made a dash on at another series of deeply-mouthed words.

Milford thought nothing could be more monotonous, and Fordham slily winked at him as he watched his silent astonishment. Similar orders were passed on this paper, and endorsed in the same manner. Then the nazir got another innings, then the serishtadar, and so on, till all the reports for the day were finished.

At this juncture Nusseer Khan, divested of his brown shikar suit, and arrayed in uniform as a chapprassee, came in and informed his master that the blue bull had arrived.

'Some of my morning's work,' said Fordham, turning to his companion with a smile; 'do you care to go out and see it?'

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'Oh, yes,' rejoined the other, springing up from his chair; 'everything is fresh to me. Good gracious! what a monster! what do you call it?'

'Well, he is a big fellow, certainly,' replied Fordham; 'it was almost a sin to shoot him. I generally call them blue bulls, for it is difficult what to call them; they belong properly to a genus of antelopes which is more common in Africa than in this country. He has the mingled attributes of the antelope, cow, and horse. The native name, *nylgão*, signifies blue bull.'

'He is almost as big as a horse,' remarked Milford.

'Yes, I suppose he is about Galloway height, 13½ or maybe 14 hands; you can hardly judge of his size as he lies strapped up on this bullock-cart. Poor brute! he gave me a smart gallop before I knocked him over.'

'What? did you kill him on horseback?'

'Yes, I generally do so when I kill them at all, and I only try to kill them when we are in want of meat, or for the villagers whose crops they destroy, and who are glad to get them to eat, poor fellows! Now all these Gonds roundabout are rejoicing at the anticipated feast, whilst those stupid Mahomedans of mine will not touch it, I am sure, because Nusseer Khan did not arrive before the breath had left its body. It is no use my telling them that their law is founded on the old Mosaic ordination regarding the blood, and that as long as the blood flows at the cut and customary prayer they may safely eat it. They are mostly ignorant men, knowing but some of the fundamental rules and ceremonies of their religion, and a few prayers in Arabic which they learn like parrots; and, by living so long amongst the Hindoos, they have insensibly imbibed many of their idolatrous neighbours' prejudices. I have a learned Mahomedan with me, a Moulvee, or Doctor of Divinity, but he is absent from

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camp to-day on business, and will not return till the meat is all disposed of; otherwise I am sure he would agree with me. The serishtadar is almost as great an ignoramus as the rest, whose mouths are watering for a bit, but they won't touch it for fear of its not being properly killed, or 'hālāl' as they term it. Here, Nusseer Khan, cut off the head and take it to the cook; tell him to pickle the tongue and also to secure the marrow-bones, and then take the animal to the other side of the tank and cut him up. Give the meat to the Gonds, and you may keep the skin for yourself.'

As Nusseer Khan made a low salaam Milford misunderstood the gesture, and asked if he had changed his mind and was going to take some of the meat.

'Oh, no,' replied Fordham, 'it was for the skin he made the salaam; they use it for various purposes; some parts of it, the neck and chest especially, are as thick and tough as buffalo hide. The nylgai are the only members of the Indian deer tribe that are strong enough to bear a burden. I have seen them carry a man, whereas a sambur stag of equal size will not carry a child. You shall see my menagerie when we return to the station, and judge for yourself; I have almost all the deer of this part of India.'

They then returned to the tent, and Milford took to his book and easy chair again, whilst Fordham called on a case. It was one which he had come to investigate, and to which we have before alluded as having constituted an old family feud between the old Pathan farmer—or malgoozar as he is termed—and his Ponwar neighbour.

We must here digress a little from our story, and try to explain, in as few words as possible, the relation which exists between the State and the landholder in India generally.

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The first principle is, that the whole of the land is the property of the State, and the use of it by the cultivator has to be paid for. It is only since the year 1861 that the surplus and waste lands of the State have been allowed to be sold to purchasers, who acquire entire proprietary right. So then the State is the great landlord, and it has to arrange to gather its rents in the form most convenient to itself. Now, if it were to deal directly with each tiller of the soil, there would be endless trouble—therefore it makes an arrangement with one, or sometimes two or more, head men in a village, for the half-yearly payments of the Government demand, leaving him or them to realise from the petty holders in detail. These petty holders become quasi-subtenants of the head men, but they have their prescriptive rights, which are protected by the State. For instance, as the head man—malgoozar or zemindar—cannot be turned out so long as he pays the Government assessment, and his office is hereditary, so the mourousee assamee, or hereditary tenant, cannot be ousted from his holding so long as he does his part in paying his rent regularly. His fields which he received from his father will descend to his son, so he is in fact a part proprietor. A tenant whose rights are not so secured becomes a tenant-at-will, and is liable to be ousted by the malgoozar, if a higher bid is made for his land. But twelve years' occupancy would entitle him to claim the rights of a mourousee tenant, and the law would protect him accordingly. Each village or group of villages has its canoongoe, or village accountant, whose duty it is to submit to the State the accounts of each tenant's holding. These canoongoes, or putwarrees, are remunerated by fixed cesses levied on all the cultivators.

In certain cases the State makes over a talooqa, or

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division containing many villages, to one man—in olden days generally a noble. He is expected to pay a certain fixed sum to the Government, and he then makes his terms with his malgoozars, and they with their tenants—the rights of each being still guaranteed by the State. He then is termed a talooqdar. When for some special service the Government demand is remitted altogether, in favour of one or more individuals, the grant is termed a jaghir, and the holder a jaghirdar. Of course the systems of land tenure vary greatly in different parts of India, but, as our story has to do with the Central Provinces only, the slight sketch above given is all that is necessary for present purposes.

When those territories were ceded to the British in the year 1818 several settlements or assessments of the Government jumma, or revenue, were made for short periods, which was a wise arrangement. Much of the arable land lay still covered with forest, and the cultivated portion was impoverished by over-taxation. By a series of short but gradually lengthening settlements, at low rates, time was given for the cleared land to recover, and settlers were encouraged to open up the fertile valleys that had hitherto lain waste.

It was now about the time for a fresh assessment, and for thirty years; and before entering into the question of how much each village ought to pay, it was necessary to have an accurate survey of the whole, with a definite demarcation of boundaries, and final adjustment of all disputes. And this was no easy matter: all the old feuds about a few yards of soil; obsolete traditions of a river bed having been diverted by one of those freaks of nature, which will occasionally take place in the rainy season; deliberate assertions of land-marks being forcibly removed; every conceivable invention and falsehood

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were brought into play on all sides, in the hope of getting a few extra acres out of a neighbour's land.

Such was the case being now investigated by Fordham. The natural demarcation between the two villages was a nullah, or brook, which, amongst other contortions peculiar to the brook kind, had made a decided start to the right, and then, after taking a short bend, turned back again, as if it had repented its little freak, and thus formed a horse-shoe before it flowed on again in its original direction. The few acres of ground thus enclosed were of good quality, and formed the *casus belli*; not that quality mattered in the least—if it had been barren rock it would have been all the same, and Fordham often declared that the final settlement of the quarrel would be a sad loss to both parties. The value of the land was the last thing they cared about; it was a point of honour with the fiery Pathan to have what he considered his own, in spite of the wily Ponwar, and he held it by force and put in his ploughs by force—and with the latter it was a secret pleasure to gall his neighbour by incessant appeals, and endless litigation, and now came the final tussle when the matter was to be decided for good. The Ponwar declared that the brook ran originally across the base of the loop, but that his opponent's grandfather made a dam which stopped the water in the rains, and caused it to find a fresh channel for itself, which it did by encroaching on his lands—that the boundary ran straight from a palas tree at the first bend to a semul tree at the second—and what could his ancestors do? There was a Mussulman Soobah at Seonee, and justice was not to be obtained by a Ponwar against a Mahomedan.

The contending parties stood on opposite sides at the door of the Kutcherry tent, just in front of the table; the space in the middle being occupied by the witness

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whose deposition was being recorded. The Ponwar was an oily-looking, slim, fair man, with cringing manners, but with a vein of caustic humour with which he occasionally touched up his impetuous opponent, who formed a great contrast in appearance—a fine, soldierly-looking man of about fifty, tall and portly, with bushy grey beard and whiskers, which were trained to stand out like those of a wild cat; a good rider, and keen sportsman; a killer of tigers and bison. Was he to be bearded and thwarted by an idolatrous, effeminate Hindoo, and a mongrel sort of Hindoo to boot? Soobhan Allah! it was enough to make his hair bristle.

Fordham was greatly amused at setting these two old foes against each other, but he was careful not to show the least favour or partiality to the Pathan, who was an old friend of his.

'It is very strange,' he remarked, 'that you two cannot live together in peace.'

'Two snakes in a basket!' murmured a bystander, at which there was a general titter; the propensity of the larger reptile to swallow the weaker one seeming to apply to the present case.

'So we will, Maharaj,' pleaded the Ponwar; 'only give me my land.'

'His land!' snorted the Moslem. 'As much his land as the sahib's tent is his. Is not the nullah the boundary, and always has been? Am I a magician, that I can make the waters flow where I like? Pah! thooh! but why should I talk before the sahib to one of a generation of liars? Ghureeb-Purwar (protector of the poor),' continued he, altering his tone to a respectful one, as he turned to Fordham, 'let my witness be called. The Gonds are truthful and not like the Ponwars.'

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Fordham nodded to the serishtadar, who called out, 'Summon Bukloo Gond.'

'Bukloo Gond, Bukloo Gond!' shouted the court peons.

'Ho, dada!' replied a primitive-looking old savage. Rising from the ground, and casting his axe over his shoulder, he advanced to the table and stood on one leg, the Gondi attitude of respect, and with his hands joined.

'Administer the oath.'

'Now, repeat after me,' said the serishtadar, in his pompous manner.

'Ho, dada!' replied the simple old man.

'You mustn't say "Ho, dada!" Repeat the oath after me.'

'Ho, dada!'

The serishtadar shrugged his shoulders and asked him in high-flown language what god he worshipped. But it was of no avail. The old fellow could only grin and answer 'Ho, dada!' whilst the bystanders were convulsed with suppressed laughter, and Fordham himself could not help smiling. Seeing at last that there was no chance of the serishtadar, who either could not or would not descend to the level of the Gond's intellect, being able to make the old man understand, Fordham took him in hand himself.

'Now then, dada,' said he, addressing him in his own dialect, 'what god do you worship?'

'Burra Deo, Maharaj,' replied the old man, grinning from ear to ear.

'Well, then, hold your hand up and swear, "Burra Deo ka kirria."'

'Burra Deo ka kirria,' repeated the old man solemnly, holding up his hand.

'What's your name?'

'Bukloo.'

'How old are you?'

'How can I say, Maharaj?—about twelve or thirteen years maybe—'

This from an old fellow of seventy-five or eighty elicited a burst of laughter, but Fordham interposed.

'How often have you seen the bamboo flower?'

'Twice, Maharaj, and a third approaches.'

'Put him down as seventy-five,' said Fordham to the serishtadar. 'Now go on and tell us what you know of the boundary of the village.'

'I knew it, Maharaj, when there was not an acre of ground on its banks under the plough. On either side for a quarter of a mile towards the villages was waste, and used for herding cattle. The brook ran where it does now: there has been no change.'

'There, see, my lord,' burst forth the fiery old Pathan; 'it is true, the Gond speaks the truth!'

'Who gives him two khundies of land for kodoo, rent free?' glibly insinuated the Ponwar.

A snort from the indignant Khan was followed by an injunction from the serishtadar to keep silence before the hakim.

'Do you know the palas tree and the semul tree at the two bends of the nullah?'

'Ho, Maharaj.'

'Beema Putail declares that his boundary runs in a straight line across, and that the nullah used to flow in that direction till it was diverted by Oomrao Khan, the present malgoozar's grandfather—is it true?'

'It is true, and it is not true, Maharaj. I knew the Khan sahib's grandfather, and Beema Putail's great-grandfather, and neither of them turned the brook; it was a greater than either of them did it—it was,' continued the

old man, lowering his voice to a solemn and mysterious whisper—'it was Doongerdeo who did it. The nullah flowed on both sides of the land. So I have heard *my* fathers say; and the land was an island sacred to him. In the midst of it stood an enormous semul tree, where the Gond people laid their offerings, and where the souls of our ancestors lived; but one day Soojahut Khan, the father of Oomrao Khan, cut down the semul to make himself a large canoe for the tank, and since then there has been ill-feeling about this land. Doongerdeo dried up one channel of the nullah, and the place was no longer sacred; for long no one would go near it. At last the cattle grazed there, and then Suka Putail, the great-grandfather of Beema Putail, laid claim to it, and there has been war about it ever since: but Doongerdeo dried up the nullah—my people have said it.'

There were varied expressions at this old legend amongst the listeners. Not a few believed in it, for tales of wonder were not uncommon in a land of forest and mountain, peopled by superstition with woodland fays and deities.

Fordham was amused with the tale, though in his own mind he was of opinion that the channel had been diverted by natural causes, not infrequent in the rainy season.

The Pathan malgoozar's face showed a mixture of contempt and somewhat of disgust at the compromising nature of the evidence, but a smile gradually came over it at the mention of the tree having caused the feud, for he remembered the canoe as a boy; it was now rotten and sunk, but it had been the finest *donga*[1] in the district.

Beema Putail was half frightened at the supernatural

[1] A dúg-out canoe.

part of the story, and half disgusted at the evident credence it obtained.

'Let my lord order a *punchayet*[1] on it,' at last he exclaimed.

'Nay,' said the Pathan, 'let Beema Putail put his hand on his son's head and walk over the boundary he claims.'

'Well,' remarked Fordham, 'I think the punchayet will be the best plan. Will you agree to one, Wuzeer Khan?'

'Ghureeb-Purwar, I will do whatever you advise.'

'Well, name one, Beema.'

'Ram Lall Seyt, Khodawund.'

'Well, Wuzeer Khan, do you agree?'

'Without doubt, my lord; Ram Lall Seyt is a good man and a just, and unlike the rest of his caste. May the curse of the Prophet light on them!' he muttered in an undertone, as he remembered sundry cash transactions with the banker caste, of which Ram Lall was a member.

'Put down Ram Lall Seyt as sir-punch. Now, Wuzeer Khan, name another.'

'Bakur Mahomed Khan.'

'His wife's sister's husband. I object, my lord,' cried Beema.

'Well, then, Raheem Khan, of Bitlee?' demanded the other.

'Very well, I agree,' said the Ponwar, adding, *sotto voce*, 'He's the same religion, but they're reputed to dislike each other.'

'Now, Beema, another on your side.'

'Nuncoo Putail, of Khapa.'

'No, no,' cried the Pathan; 'you lent him three hun-

[1] A jury or board of arbitration, usually consisting of five, viz. four members and a sir-punch or president.

dred rupees for his daughter's marriage, and do you think he will give fair judgment?'

Beema appealed to Fordham, but was told he must name some one to whom his opponent would agree, so after great wrangling they chose a Gond. Then the Pathan named another Gond, who was accepted without demur, both sides apparently having faith in the simple honesty of the aborigines. Finally, Beema proposed another Ponwar, who, after some discussion, was accepted. And so the arbitration stood as follows. One Mahomedan and one Ponwar, two Gonds, and a Mahajun, or banker, for sir-punch, or president.

Orders were then passed for the summoning of the arbitrators, and the court closed for the day.

'I am afraid it is rather late for the hog,' remarked Fordham, looking at his watch; 'however, we can but try, though we have some little distance to ride. *Allons*, boot and saddle!'

'Are we sure to find them soon?' asked Milford.

'Pretty certain. There are few places in this district where you can ride pig, and we are going to one of the best. There are some sugar-cane fields, in which they lie sometimes for days together, and there is a clear run of about two miles before they can get into thick cover; but it is ticklish riding over black cotton soil for the first mile: after that we come on a bed of laterite, which is first-rate.'

Here the old jemadar came in and whispered something to his master.

'Ah! I quite forgot, Milford; do you mind putting up with small game to-day and leaving the pig for the morning?'

'No, not in the least. I am ready for anything.'

'Well, then, I must tell you I want a live adult

male of the rib-face, or barking deer, for my menagerie, and so I gave orders for a small hill, which is supposed to contain one or two of these animals, to be surrounded by nets on three sides and driven on the fourth. We will take spears, in case we get a tough customer like a panther or hyena in the nets.'

The horses were already saddled, and a few minutes sufficed for the sportsmen to don their shikar suits. Fordham looked with interest at the bran-new guns in their glossy cases which his young companion had brought out, but there was no time to lose in looking over all the latest improvements; so he turned to his own weather-beaten rifles, every piece of which had its story to tell of hair's-breadth escapes and stirring scenes, and his eye brightened, and his heart warmed towards them as he thought that the finest battery modern skill could turn out would hardly replace his old, well-tried friends.

'I shall take this with me to-day,' he said, turning to Nusseer Khan, and tapping a long single-barrelled rifle. 'You are in disgrace, my friend, since you missed the man-eating tiger at Sirekha; but we will give you a chance now and then of retrieving your character.'

'That's a killing-looking weapon,' remarked Milford, as he noticed its great length, and the heaviness of the metal.

'Yes; as a rule it carries very truly, but my faith was shaken in it the other day,' rejoined Fordham. 'I had been out after a tiger at Sirekha, at the confluence of the Hirrie river with the Bān Gunga, and after much toil came upon him, lying under a clump of bamboo. I was particularly anxious to get him, for he had lately taken to man-eating, and, as he lay looking at me with his head between his paws, I foolishly laid down the double rifle I had in my hand and took up 'Plugger,' thinking

to brain him as he lay, and for the first time the weapon played me false, or rather, I should say, my own eye and hand, for, after all, it is little a shooting-iron can do if the aimer's hand shakes.'

Their route from the camp lay along the edge of the tank—a sheet of water which in England would probably be called a lake—and the younger Englishman was greatly interested in the variety of water-fowl which, most of them new to him, dotted its surface or which sported along its banks. Wild ducks in countless numbers thronged the placid bosom of the waters, or circled round and round in the air preparatory to settling down—along the edges stalked long-legged cranes—the graceful sarus,[1] with his crimson head and stately carriage, towering above the smaller storks and ibises around him. Here and there a solitary heron stood motionless, watching for an unwary fish. Stilts and sandpipers hunted along the oozy margin for their food, and the elegant pheasant-tailed, golden-necked jacana glided swiftly over the leaves of the water lilies.

'Look,' said Fordham, pointing to a clear patch of water, out of the midst of which a slender-pointed head like that of a serpent rose, looked round for a second, and then withdrew again, to be raised afresh a few yards further.

'What is it?—a snake?' asked Milford.

'No, not a snake, but a snake-bird. It is a most extraordinary creature, a very handsome species of diver;[2] in the morning you may often see it perched on a stone, with its wings spread out like a Prussian Eagle, basking in the sun and looking the essence of stupidity, but in the water they are most wary birds, generally

[1] *Grus Antigone.* [2] *Plotus melanogaster.*

swimming with the body submerged, and it is little use shooting at them, for, in addition to the very small mark they afford, they dive at the flash like an American loon; they have beautiful plumes which, in some parts of the country, are considered emblems of nobility like those of the heron.'

A large batch of teal now came whirling over their heads, and fell plump like a shower of shot into the lake; at the same instant, with a sound like the whizz of an arrow as it passes close to the ear, darted a bhyri, or peregrine falcon, but this time the teal were too quick for him, and the disappointed hawk soared on and upwards in his swoop, and passed over to the other side.

By this time the horsemen had neared the end of the tank, and surmounting a slight slope, covered with low beyr bushes, they came in sight of the hill to be driven, which lay jutting out from a low range which bounded the horizon.

'Hist!' whispered Fordham, 'there is a chikara just within range. Now, Milford, try your luck.'

The graceful little gazelle[1] was unconsciously nibbling some of the tender shoots, and had not as yet noticed the party. Milford seized his glossy Purdey, fresh from its case, and, eagerly aiming, fired. The gazelle bounded high in the air, and went down the slope at a pace which showed that not much damage had been done.

The young sportsman blushed with disappointment and vexation, but Fordham assured him a chikara was no easy mark for a beginner, and he would soon get over the little excitement that always prevails at first. And then, as they went on, he related several anecdotes of his own failures in years gone by.

[1] *Gazella Bennettii.*

On arriving at the hill they found the nets all arranged, and the beaters waiting.

'You must not consider this poaching business as an introduction to Indian sports, Milford,' remarked his companion. 'This is merely to gratify my mania for collecting living specimens of animals, and I find that if I trust to the natives to trap them, they invariably hurt the poor things in some way. Now, look here, these are long fishing nets, strong enough to hold the creatures I want, but you can never be certain in this district that the smallest copse does not contain a tiger or other savage animal, and therefore I warn you to look out. Hyenas are very common in such places as this; consequently I have given each net-watcher a spear. I shall guard this run myself, as I see some tracks here of rib-faced deer, kakur or bherki as the natives call them. You take the next. Nusseer Khan, who has got the end net to the left? it's a likely run.'

'That one-eyed shikaree from the Putail's village, my lord.'

'Oh! that braggart; he won't do much even with a hyena. Now tell the beaters to begin.'

Some minutes elapsed before a messenger could get round to the back of the hill where the beaters were assembled, and during the interval the two Englishmen hid themselves as much as possible behind bushes, and awaited the advance. The nets were placed on supports, so as give way with an animal of the size of the kakur and fall over him, and were partially hidden by light, feathery branches of the aonla tree,[1] planted here and there in front. Milford, to whom all was new and fresh, felt intensely excited as the faint sound of drums

[1] *Phyllanthus emblica*.

and shouts came, borne by the breeze which swept over the hill. Then birds of all kinds came flying over; the chattering and screaming latora,[1] or buff-magpie, first attracted his notice. Then a jungle-fowl rose with a whirr and swept over his head; then a peacock with a magnificent train—how his fingers itched to pull a trigger at it as it passed; then another and another; out dashed a hare, and fell into Fordham's net, but, not being heavy enough to bring it down, it was frightened back. As Milford watched he thought he could see something moving cautiously through the bushes, something with reddish hair; his heart beat faster as he thought it might be a tiger or panther. However, his doubts were soon set at rest when a beautiful little deer stepped out of the dense copse, and advanced cautiously, now and then stopping with uplifted forefoot to listen to the approaching beaters. It was about three feet or so in length, and of a reddish chestnut colour, low in the fore-quarters; but its chief peculiarity lay in its head, which was unlike anything Milford had seen before. From the mouth projected two sharp little tusks curved downwards, the skin between the eyes was puckered up into longitudinal ridges, whence comes its name of rib-faced. Above each eye rose a bony pedicle, covered with skin and hair, to the height of three or four inches, and on each of these was a short two-pronged horn. These deer are not uncommon all over India in forest lands, but they are very shy, solitary animals, seldom found even in pairs. In captivity they get very tame, and evince most extraordinary freaks of appetite, eating meat freely, and even gnawing bones. They are very good eating.

The little animal was advancing with all the caution

[1] *Dendrocitta rufa.*

of a prowling lynx, when one of the foremost beaters flung a handful of gravel high in the air, which came clattering down like a volley of bullets. The bherki started, and, dashing blindly forward in terror, was in a moment entangled in the meshes of Fordham's net.

Both Milford and Nusseer Khan rushed to help him, and after much ineffectual struggling the little fellow was firmly, but harmlessly, bound in a long strip of soft calico which formed Nusseer Khan's waist-band. They had just accomplished their task when a most diabolical yell was heard from their left, with shouts from all the beaters, some of whom screamed 'Bāgh! bāgh!' from the mere supposition that it might be a tiger. Others, who saw something black, yelled 'Bhaloo! bhaloo!' (bear). Many just screamed anything out of fun, not knowing or caring what it might be. All knew that some big animal had broken cover, and that was enough to raise the hideous din.

On the extreme left a net was given in charge, as we have before said, to a one-eyed shikaree, whose exploits, judging from his own account of them, were of no common order. Our friend squatted down behind a bush, with a formidable-looking phulsa, or broad-bladed spear, with which he was quite prepared to do great deeds of valour on any small fry, such as hares, mungooses, porcupines, &c. But he was not in luck's way—nothing came near him, not even a field mouse, although once or twice he thought he heard a rustling in the coppice just in front of him. The approaching beaters warned him that the chance of anything was nearly over, and he was indulging in a comfortable yawn, when with a savage grunt a grisly boar dashed headlong out of the thicket, and, to his horror, fell slap into his net. No doubt piggy was as astonished as the shikaree, and gave

vent to various mingled grunts and squeals, expressive of his disapprobation, during which time his struggles to get free were making serious rents in the net; still, had our friend been the mighty man of valour he was supposed to be, there was time and opportunity for driving the heavy blade through his foe's brawny chest, and adding an additional laurel to his crown. But, alas!. the flesh was too weak. Uttering the piercing shriek that startled the two Englishmen, the valiant hunter cast away his weapon and fled. A few more vigorous rips and tugs at the net, and the boar was free, and, catching sight of the flying figure, he made after him.

By the time Fordham and Milford were on their feet and had hold of their guns the fugitive came in sight, closely pursued by his adversary. Milford rapidly fired at the boar in hopes of stopping him, but missed. Again he levelled the second barrel, and this time with some effect, for the boar staggered and fell, but picking himself up he dashed on savagely again at the luckless native. There was only one chance for him now, and that was with Fordham. The distance was a long one, but Plugger had done well at even a greater range. Deliberately, too deliberately under the circumstances Milford thought, the long barrel was raised; the young man held his breath and strained his eyes with expectation. For a second the deadly tube remained steady, and the bright flash shot forth. The man fell exhausted, but struck through the brain the boar rolled over him—dead!

'Humph!' ejaculated Fordham, 'I'm glad Plugger has retrieved his character this time. He has saved that poor fellow's life at all events.'

Milford had rushed off to help the unfortunate shikaree, who was sitting up, rocking his body backwards and forwards, and moaning dismally. He was, however, more

frightened than hurt; though he had an ugly scratch across his left shoulder-blade, where the boar had attempted to rip him as he rolled over.

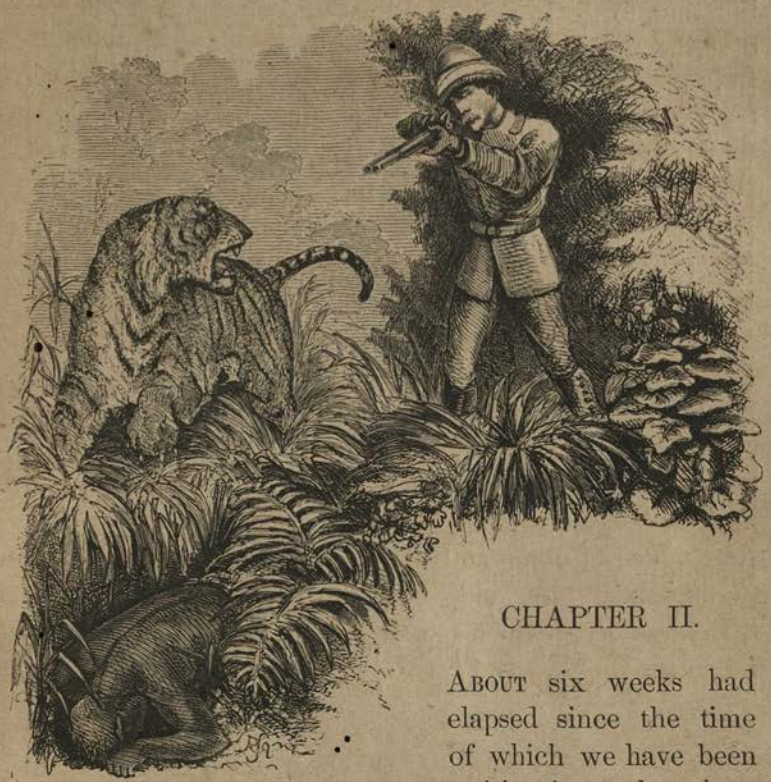
Nothing now remained but to pay off the beaters and go home. Fordham was generally very particular about paying the men himself, so that none of the money intended for them should pass into other hands. For this purpose he always brought a bag of copper on the field, and each beater presented his voucher, which consisted of a gun wad, which had been served to him at the time of enlistment. As his method was well known in the country he never had the least difficulty in getting men. In fact there is nothing the Gonds enjoy so much as a day's shooting out with a sahib, and, as each man gets from a penny to twopence-halfpenny in Indian money for the day's work, it combines profit with pleasure, for, small as the sum may appear to us, it is more than what these poor savages usually earn. However, it is not the Gonds alone who join in these sports. All castes and ranks eagerly enrol themselves when notice is given of a 'hānk' or drive.

It was nearly dark by the time the friends got home, quite dark under the gloom of the trees, and it was getting chilly too as the mists rose from the surface of the tank. The camp looked gay with numerous fires: larger ones, round which gathered parties of camel drivers, elephant keepers, grooms, and numerous camp servants and followers; whilst smaller ones, like lesser stars, dotted the recesses of the grove where the Sepoys were cooking their suppers; and the ruddy light of the fire on the bronzed skin of the athletic Rajpoot, as stripped to his waist-cloth he bent over his evening meal, made a subject for a painter's eye that would have delighted Salvator Rosa or Rembrandt. Inside the tent,

where dinner was being laid, there was a scene of still greater cheerfulness. A neat camp-table, with glittering glass and plate on the snowy cloth. A handsome lamp, shedding a brilliant light over all. Round one of the doors was extended semicircularly a curtain to keep off the wind, and the door shade had been taken off, so as not to interfere with the smoke and sparks of a crackling wood fire, which was brightly blazing away. A watchful servant sat close by with sundry jars of water, ready to extinguish, if necessary, any sparks which might set fire to the curtains or tent walls.

Round this cheerful blaze the two friends gathered after a hearty dinner of soup, sānwul fish from the lake, a roast haunch of black buck, pintail duck and blue bull marrow-bones, with a bottle of good Burgundy; and they talked of home and friends in old England till the night waxed late, and then they retired to a hunter's dreamless sleep, which closed Milford's first day of camp life in the jungles.

RIB-FACED DEER.



CHAPTER II.

About six weeks had elapsed since the time of which we have been writing in our last chapter. An old man stood, leaning on the barrel of a matchlock of unusual length, on the edge of a hill overlooking one of the most beautiful valleys of the Seonee district—the valley of the Dullal—a little gem amongst the hills of the northern part of the Durasi talooqa, a few miles to the south-east of the station of Seonee. It was a scene to gladden the eye of any lover of nature—the fringe of sombre forest—the refreshing green of the valley beneath—the glorious blaze of colour from the crimson flowers of the palas,[1] now

[1] *Butea frondosa.*

bursting forth into bloom everywhere. Pen can hardly describe the effect of the masses of this splendid tree, the 'Flame of the forest,' as it is sometimes called; under its gorgeous blossoms the graceful, fuchsia-like grislea, with its coralline branches, pales into insignificance. Only the lordly cotton tree [1] dares to rival it, and that only from the size of its buttressed trunk and giant arms. Its massive waxen petals are of a more dingy crimson, and lack the vividness of the orange tint in the butea. Here and there the eye might fall on a more brilliant spot, where the golden chalice of the *gubdi* [2] tips the branchlets of this peculiar candelabra-shaped tree. But the general aspect of the forest was a blaze of crimson relieved by dark green. Even the old hunter seemed struck by it as his eye wandered over the landscape, familiar though it was to him. He was about fifty-five or sixty years of age, tall and erect, with a singularly mild face, deep-set eyes, mouth with a plaintive expression, slightly shaded by a scanty white moustache, a little tuft of white hair on his chin, a lean, bony head and face, and long, scraggy neck, deeply seamed with many scars. His meagre form was arrayed in a sort of hunting shirt of greenish brown, belted at the waist with sambur leather. Breeches of the same colour reached down to just below his knees, his legs and feet being bare. Round his head was a small tightly twisted turban of the same hue as the rest of his garments, and at his belt he carried a long Lahore knife, a horn of powder, and a small wallet containing bullets, flint and steel, &c.

This was Sheykha, the most redoutable shikaree of the district. His ancestors for several generations had followed the peaceful avocation of hair-dressing, being

[1] *Bombax heptaphyllum.* [2] *Cochlospermum gossypium.*

barbers by profession—not of the Hindoo but of the Mussulman religion. But forty years before Sheykha, then a mere stripling, threw away the razor and took to the matchlock, and whilst yet a young man his fame was spread throughout the land. Many were the stories of his exploits—how on one occasion he had cut down a tiger with a sword—how on another, when a comrade was being carried off, Sheykha stood forward and shouted to the tiger '*Khubburdar!*'[1] The brute stopped and looked round, and the next moment fell, shot through the brain. The deep scars on his neck told of a desperate struggle with a panther, which brought him nigh to death's door; others on his body and chest bore witness to a dreadful encounter with a wounded bison. At such times, when he lay on a bed of pain hovering betwixt life and death, he would declare that he would give up the hunter's life; but when he got better and began to clean out his rusting matchlock, the old jungle fit would come on with the smell of the powder, and he would be off again as soon as he could travel. Many and many a time has he gone up to the magistrate's office and cast down his load of skins—tigers', panthers', and bears',—for the Government reward, and a long list of payments made to him exists in the records to this day.

The old man had marched fully ten miles that morning and had still another fifteen before him, and therefore he stayed no longer than was necessary to recover a little breath lost in toiling up the steep path to the top of the hill, when, bringing his matchlock to the trail, he strode off along the crest of the ridge on which he had been halting. The path, which was one used by the iron-workers of the Durasi hills on their way to the Seonee markets, led

[1] 'Take care!'

for some distance through the forest, when it suddenly opened on a well-made road, which had evidently been laid out by European skill. This was one of the district roads leading from the station of Seonee down to the Tehseel, or sub-treasury of Kuttunghee, in the valley of the Bān Gunga. It was market-day at Seonee, and the old hunter met strings of people going home to their various villages. They were of all castes and classes. The Ponwar in his light bullock cart, or khanchur, drawn by a pair of little fast-trotting bullocks, small high-blooded deer-headed animals that will trot their eight miles an hour without whip or goad; sleek-looking Telees[1] on ponies, happy, light-hearted Gonds, most of them, the girls especially, with a bright bunch of palas flowers, or the sweet-scented sprays of the *Tinsa*,[2] stuck on one side of their heads. Such is the fondness of the Gond for this style of decoration, that, when some years ago oats were introduced into the district and distributed amongst the malgoozars for experiment, the Gonds were so struck with the peculiarly graceful grain that it was with difficulty they were restrained from plucking it to adorn their turbans. The old hunter was well known by many on the road. There was hardly a village in the vicinity where he had not lodged on a tiger-slaying expedition, and many were the greetings he got and looks of wonder from the stalwart Gondian damsels, who, with their sturdy bare limbs, tattooed with elaborate patterns, strode Amazon-like after their less athletic-looking lords. One of the first things that strike a stranger on entering Gondwana is the muscular power exhibited by the females of the aboriginal tribes as compared with the men—a state of things to be paralleled in the animal kingdom only by the hawks.

[1] *Oil-dealers.*

[2] *Dalbergia oojeinensis.*

However, we must not wander from our story.

After following the main road for about a mile the old hunter struck into a side path to the right, which led over a gentle upland to a village which crowned the height about two miles off. The day was waning and he had still far to go, so he hurried on at a swinging pace. He had left the forest behind him and had entered on a partially cleared country. Here and there were open fields under cultivation, strips of grazing land dotted with bushes, and other plots lying fallow and overgrown with weeds. Two more fields remained between him and the village, and, as he noticed three ponies grazing there, he thought he might make an arrangement with the owner of one of them to get one to carry him on to his intended resting-place, which was still some miles farther.

As he thought over the matter he suddenly stopped, and dropped silently behind a tuft of coarse grass which grew by the side of the path. Motionless he lay for a minute or two, cautiously peering through the cover in front of him. A large panther had glided through the bushes in front, and was intent on stalking the ponies. He was too near the old man for him to venture on the least noise, and so, stealthy as the feline itself, he crouched and watched. At last the panther moved a little further. The shikaree drew out of his wallet the flint and steel, and gently striking a spark on the end of the bit of slow match which was attached to his piece, slid off the lid of the pan and put in a fresh pinch of priming powder. All was done as deliberately as if there was no need to hurry —and indeed there was not. The hunter knew the habits of the animal he watched. He knew that the panther was calculating the chances of a rush across an open space to where the ponies were feeding, and that, as long as there was any hope of their coming incautiously

nearer to him, he would crouch and bide his time. Men bred to a forest life learn much from the beasts of prey, and amongst other things the force of that great truth, 'Most haste worst speed.'

So Sheykha waited patiently. An ordinary Englishman in his place would have been too eager, and risked a shot at the brute's head—he was not more than forty or fifty yards off; but it would not do for the native. His matchlock had two bullets in it, and he wanted both to be planted in the panther's body. But as he lay, close pressed to the ground in a slight hollow, it was not feasible. At last the animal's patience seemed to give way, for he slowly rose, and, whisking his tail from side to side, settled his powerful quarters for a rush. The long barrel was carefully pushed through the grass, and the next moment the panther, mortally wounded, rolled over and plunged into the thicket.

The old hunter lay perfectly still for a while, knowing the savage nature of the beast with whom he had to deal, and he loosened his long knife in its sheath, ready for action if it were needed. But all was as still as the grave, save for the chirrup of the crickets in the grass, or the monotonous notes of the nightjars which were coming out as the sun went down. At last the shikaree rose, still cautiously, with eyes and ears strained, and, placing his knife between his teeth, he stepped out into the open, and began carefully to reload.

Having filled a measure with coarse powder from a large horn slung at his waist-belt, he chose two bullets, one a size smaller than the other. The larger one, carefully wrapped in a patch, he rammed down tight over the powder; the next bullet with a bit of rag over it went down on the top of the first. This notion of the two bullets may or may not have been peculiar to

Sheykha's tactics. Many Indian shikarees use three or even more bullets, but Sheykha used to declare that with two bullets, one a little smaller than the other, the aim was certain with the tight-fitting one, and the other would not fly more than a span apart, thus giving two severe wounds at once. Whether this ingenious theory will bear a practical test we much doubt. Having rammed down his bullets, he took out a small gazelle horn, beautifully polished, plugged at the bottom, and with a small hole drilled at the finer end, into which was inserted a wooden stopper. This contained a little fine-grained English powder, with which he replenished the pan of his matchlock. Having done this to his entire satisfaction, and having replaced the horn in his wallet—all the time his eyes and ears having been on the alert—the old hunter sheathed again his knife, and, shouldering his piece, strode off rapidly towards the village; suddenly stopping, he turned back, and noting the position of the tuft of grass, and the place where the panther was crouching, he broke a twig, and, slitting the top, inserted in it another smaller twig. This T-shaped instrument he forced into the ground, the cross twig at the top pointing in the direction the panther had taken. Having thus made his memorandum for future guidance, he strode off again, and was short within the precincts of the village.

Here he was pressed to stay for the night by the malgoozar, who knew him well, and who was also grateful for the supposed destruction of the panther, who had on several occasions lately carried off the villagers' calves and goats, and also a favourite dog. But the shikaree said he must go on to Major Fordham's camp that night, and, accepting the loan of a pony, and the gift of a drink of milk, he started afresh. The moon

had risen, and the country was tolerably open, and in about two hours' time the white tents of the camp came in sight. Tethering his pony at the house of an old acquaintance of his in the village, the old hunter made his way to Fordham's tent, and, as the sahib was at dinner, he sat down amongst the peons outside till he could have an audience.

Our friends, Fordham and Milford, were in truth at the moment of Sheykha's arrival deep in the discussion of a game pie, in which sundry and divers victims of their guns and rifles were represented; and, reader, a game pie properly made—especially when the ingredients have most of them a story attached to them—is a dainty dish fit to set before a king. There is a zest in each piece of venison when you know the patient stalk you had to secure the proud buck, the clever snap shot at the hare, the day's fag after the snipe and the teal—all these come before you as you appease the cravings of nature after a hard day of jungle work.

After dinner was over, a servant placed a chess board on the table, and retired, when the old jemadar entered, and announced the arrival of Sheykha.

'Call him in, call him in,' said Fordham. 'Now, Milford, you will see the most noted shikaree of the district. I think he is rather overrated, but he is a staunch old fellow after all, and certainly is the best of the lot; though now he is getting garrulous in his old age.'

'Why, he is the very image of old Natty Bumppo in Cooper's novels!' exclaimed Milford, as the old man entered, and, after making a salaam, grounded his piece, and stood in respectful attention.

'Yes, there are points of resemblance,' rejoined Fordham; 'but our friend Sheykha is hardly up to the mark

of the American, though he is a bit of a hero in his way too.

'There are many points of resemblance in appearance,' remarked Milford; 'his lean figure, scraggy neck, and mild, open face; and then the dress is not unlike, only that he dispenses with the gaiters that old Leatherstocking got his name from.'

'Yes, and there are other traits which coincide with the novelist's hero—Sheykha's simple habits; he is the only native I know hereabouts who will not even smoke tobacco. He says he got out of the way of it, because the wild beasts smell you quicker if you carry an aroma of the Virginian weed about you. I know not if it be true, but it is one of Sheykha's theories, and I have not any reason to doubt it. Then he has the same love for the backwoods, and seldom stays long in the station. But, as I said before, he is getting garrulous in his old age—a common fault. Well, Sheykha,' he continued, addressing the shikaree, 'I am glad you have come, for there is a tiger to arrange for beyond Khundipar, and the ground is so bad, and the brute so cunning, that I am afraid we shall have to sit out for him at night, as the elephant is of no use.'

The old fellow shook his head. 'No use there, sahib; there are ravines where no elephant could go; we must tie out a bait, but even that will not avail much. I know that tiger of old; he is a regular skulker, very suspicious. We must wait till he kills some cow of his own free will, and then, Inshallah! we will circumvent him. But he won't be driven; you must lead him.'

'So I hear,' rejoined Fordham, 'and if any one can circumvent him, you can, and therefore I sent for you. I think you had better go off there to-morrow morning and see what can be done. I particularly want to

destroy that brute, for I hear he has killed one man, and he may now become a regular man-eater.'

'If your slave might speak, he has a petition to make,' urged the old man.

'Certainly; say on—what is it?'

Sheykha then recounted the scene with the panther, and begged permission to track him up in the morning, and secure the skin, which was worth ten rupees to him.

Leave was granted at once, and Fordham asked his young companion if he would like to go with Sheykha, in which case he might take the elephant. 'I cannot go myself,' he added, 'for I must gallop out to look at a landmark where three villages meet, and which, it is alleged, has been removed from its proper place.'

Milford eagerly assented, and, the necessary orders having been given, Sheykha got his *congé*, and the two Englishmen settled down to their game of chess.

Milford was roused up at a very early hour next morning by his old bearer, who in sepulchral tones called out, 'Sahib! sahib! it's past five o'clock; the yellow clouds are coming out.'

'Holloa!' exclaimed the young man, jumping out of bed and rubbing his sleepy eyes. He could hear the cawing of the crows and the faint clarion of the distant village cocks. A hurried splashing in cold water from a neighbouring stream, and in ten minutes he was ready dressed to go out. He had by this time adopted his elder companion's mode of dress; and, as it had seen a month's jungle work, he looked more of the shikaree than he did on the first day of his camp life. The only things he retained were the buckskin breeches, which he did by Fordham's advice, and he found the comfort of them in resisting the attacks of the spear-grass, which is so annoying to the hunter at that season of the year.

This grass,[1] which grows in the Central Provinces to a height of two to three feet, must be felt to be appreciated. It has a little sharp seed, bearing at one end a slightly curved and barbed point, as acute as a needle, and at the other end a long awn like that of barley, and which has a similar property of working its way on by friction. The unwary traveller who marches with a pair of ordinary woollen trousers through a patch of this grass comes out bristling like the fretful porcupine, and half mad with irritation. The next best protection after leather is good stout moleskin.

Milford's dressing had been done by candlelight, and now a cup of steaming chocolate and rounds of buttered toast were brought in and done ample justice to. The chocolate finished, he sallied out into the fresh open air. The 'yellow clouds,' as his bearer had called them, had come out in good earnest, and the eastern sky glowed with crimson and gold. A stout Cabul, which rejoiced in the name of 'Brownie,' stood ready saddled at the door; an orderly was having a fight with his vicious Roman-nosed brute; in the background towered the lofty form of old Bussunta, the elephant, flapping her huge ears. Sheykha was waiting with his long matchlock, as were also two chapprassees, divested of their uniforms and clad in sober shikar clothing.

Fordham had left some time before, as he had far to go, and so Milford, vaulting into the saddle, led the way at once, Sheykha going on ahead as a guide. The sun was well up when they got to the village where the panther had been shot, and ten minutes more led them to the spot where the old shikaree had left his mark; the little stick was soon found, and then Milford got on

[1] *Andropogon aciculatus.*

the elephant, and the stately creature passed on with ponderous but silent strides into the thicket. This was the young man's first chance of meeting with one of the feline race, and his heart beat a little faster than ordinary as he kept a sharp look-out, in hopes of turning out the wounded panther. At last Bussunta struck the end of her trunk upon the ground with a hollow sound, and lifted it high out of harm's way.

'Look out, sahib!' remarked the mahout; 'the elephant smells the "tendua."'

Milford's feelings rose to the highest pitch of expectation when Sheykha, quietly pointing to the left, said 'There he is, sahib, but he is dead.'

So he was, lying stiff and cold with two bullets through his ribs. It was a disappointment to the young man, who expected some fun. However, he was not of a jealous disposition, and the next moment he was off the elephant, and examining the panther with curiosity and interest; he was a magnificent animal of the larger variety, and the boy envied Sheykha his good luck in coming across him. A young dhaman tree was quickly felled and stripped of its lateral branches, and the feet of the pard being tied together, the pole was passed under them, and four stout young fellows carried him off to the camp.

'Now, what are we to do, Sheykha?' asked the young sportsman. 'Is there any chance of anything on our way home?'

'Allah only knows,' rejoined the old man, 'where the wandering tiger will rest or the sambur hides from the noonday sun, and there are both of them in the hills around us. But if your honour does not mind a circuit of a few miles, there is a little hill, called by the Gonds "Mullol Mutta," or the hare's hill, where we may with

portion of the hill. The whole was one of those curious natural freaks not uncommon in the overlying trap formation of the Satpura range, in which it appeared as though some volcano had burst through the upper crust, heaving great masses of igneous rock above the surface of what then may have been but barren lava beds, now decomposed by the wear and tear of ages into a fertile soil, covered with well-cultivated cornfields and verdant pastures. There was a deep irregular fissure between the two rocks, the corresponding indentations of which proved that, at one time, the masses had been one piece, subsequently separated by some convulsion of nature.

As Milford was peering down the dark chasm he was startled by a savage growl, and, at the same instant, he perceived a pair of greenish eyes glaring at him out of the gloomy recesses of the cave. Impulsively he presented his rifle, and fired both barrels rapidly. The hastiness of the act rather startled him, on a moment's reflection, for he had no other gun with him, and now he had emptied both barrels, leaving himself totally unprepared for a charge. The only thing to be done under the circumstances was to reload at once, when he found, to his dismay, that his ramrod, which was rather loose in the barrel, had dropped down the chasm at the time he fired. But not a sound was to be heard—all was still. Sending a man down for another gun, he waited impatiently for his return, when, seizing the fresh weapon, he ventured to the edge of the fissure again, and peered down. All was quiet, and, as his eyes got accustomed to the gloom, he thought he could see a dusky object extended below. Stones were thrown down, when, all at once, arose a shout from the Gonds, 'Asol na peela! Asol na peela!' (bear's cubs! bear's cubs!) and two little black, shaggy creatures rushed out, and began

tumbling downhill. A bright little axe flew from the hand of one of the Gonds, and one of the pair fell brained; the other got into a hole.

It is astonishing with what accuracy these people use their little hatchets. Although we have never seen anything approaching to the marvellous feats of the North American Indians, as recorded in the pages of Cooper and other writers (which, if not exaggerated, certainly emulate the Chinese knife-trick, and would make an antagonistic Omahaw, Sioux, or Pawnee an awkward customer to tackle with a regulation sword), still we have seen a Gond knock over a hare at full speed with a celerity and certainty of aim which would make one decidedly object to stand the test of a shy at one's own head.

Milford was rather annoyed at the fate of the poor little fellow, who was not much bigger than a Skye terrier; he would rather have secured him alive. However, there was a chance of getting his brother out of the cave, or rather crevice, into which he had crept, and so he ventured in. The crevice narrowed inwards like the mould of a wedge, and he had not far to go in before he found young Bruin, like a frightened child, with his head well stuffed into the corner; from which he was lugged out by his hind legs, snarling and snapping in impotent rage, most amusing in such a small creature. The Gonds in the mean time had dragged out the mother, who, luckily for her assailant, had been shot through the brain.

Milford had quite got over the disappointment of the morning now; at all events he would not go back empty-handed, and quite felt like a mighty hunter. But he had still more in store for him.

The beaters had arrived at the hill, having started off

at a run when they heard the shots and the shouts of the Gonds chasing the young bears. Sheykha now proposed that they should beat the southern end of the hill, where there were some likely dens. It was very probable that the old male bear was in one of them, and it was a matter of consideration to kill him, as he was reported to be a 'pucca budzat,' which may be translated 'a thorough bad lot,' having severely mauled an old woman of the village the preceding mohwa season.

At the base of the hill ran a small gravelly nullah, on the opposite bank of which, and immediately facing the caves, Milford was posted, Sheykha guarding a corner a little further off, in case he broke out in that direction. Sheykha had suggested that the sahib should mount his elephant, and thus be in a position of safety, but the mahout said that Bussunta, though steady as a rock with tigers, had a special aversion to bears and pigs, and could not be brought to face them steadily; so Milford decided on standing on the edge of the nullah.

The beat began, and came on merrily—jovial fellows the Gonds are at this kind of work; laughter and shouts, uncouth yells as any unfortunate hare or small deer broke out of cover, practical jokes upon each other, and unrestrained mirth if any of the party came to any trifling mishap—and so on they came. But Sheykha had so ordered the beat, that between ten men of the village he placed one of the peons or camp followers, who were supplied with the 'anars' to be thrown into the caves which abounded. Several of these missiles had been sent fizzing and smoking down the crevices in the rocks without much effect; but at last one must have lighted just on Bruin's nose, for, with a most astounding roar, which caused a universal stampede, he burst out of his den, and came blundering down the hill just in front of Milford.

The young sportsman's nerves were strung to the highest pitch. This was the first time he had been openly opposed to a savage beast, and it seemed likely to be a combat *à outrance*, for the bear had seen him, and, with a surly growl, was coming straight at him, and there was nothing for it but to trust to good shooting. Of his two guns one was useless, he having dropped his ramrod down upon the she-bear, and a Gond stepping on it in the dark had snapped it in two. His other gun was some inches shorter in the barrel, so its ramrod was of no use, and he was as yet too raw a woodsman to have thought of carrying a spare loading rod—a thing he never forgot afterwards.

When the bear was about half-way down the hill, he stopped for a moment, as if undecided whether to go straight at the young Englishman, or branch off down the track, which would have led him to the corner guarded by old Sheykha. Milford took advantage of the pause, and after a steady aim fired. Bruin received the shot with a roar, dancing about for a second or two on his hind legs, and then quite made up his mind to charge his assailant, which he did with a vengeance, roaring as if he were the combined mouthpiece of the whole tribe. But it was not an old woman picking mohwa flowers that he had to deal with this time, and he received a second shot, which tumbled him headlong down the hill into the little gravelly nullah. Picking himself up he held gallantly on, and matters were assuming a serious aspect for Milford, who was trying to reload as fast as possible. Azim Khan drew his knife and seemed inclined to stand by his master, and Akbar Ali, the mahout, urged Bussunta in hopes of frightening off the savage brute. At this moment the old shikaree rushed up, and throwing himself on his knees levelled his long matchlock, steadying

A peon returned with the Gond and his burden, which consisted of a basket with a net tied over it, and inside was an extraordinary-looking creature, with a snout and a long tail—but body, tail, and legs all covered with great scales like those of a fish.

'That's a queer-looking lot,' remarked Milford; 'what is it?'

'Why, it's a pangolin,[1] a scaly ant-eater,' rejoined his companion, who was kneeling beside the basket. 'I have had them brought to me dead, but this is the first live one I have got hold of.'

The animal in question had tightly rolled himself up into a compact ball, and consequently did not show to advantage; but after being left alone awhile he uncoiled. In colour he was dirty-white, and in length about 2½ feet, including his tail. His scales were very fish-like; 'in fact,' continued Fordham, who had been giving his young companion some account of the beast, 'in fact, he is called by the natives in some parts *bun rohoo*, which means the jungle carp.'

'What do they eat?' asked Milford.

'Well, that puzzles me, how to keep him alive. Their food consists of ants, and principally white ants; they have no teeth, so there is no fear of his snapping your fingers off. We must do our best to find provender for him, and I doubt not we shall succeed. A few pice a day will bring him ants enough; but a naturalist friend of mine has had great difficulty in keeping one alive, even for a short time.'

The Gond suggested that a little water should be given to it, as he had carried it far, and the sun had been hot.

Milford ran for a saucer; and, filling it, placed it in

[1] *Manis pentadactyla.*

the basket. They then retired a short distance. After a little while the pangolin uncoiled itself, and, in an instant, its long flexible tongue was lapping up the water with a rapidity that raised a froth on the surface. But when any of the bystanders approached it turned itself into a ball again.

Sheykha now came up with the panther's skin, and the skull, from the latter of which all the superfluous flesh had been removed, preparatory to boiling it for its further cleansing.

'That's a grand panther, Sheykha!' remarked Fordham; 'why, his skull is like that of a tigress!'

'Yes, sahib,' replied the old man, 'he is the biggest I have ever killed, and I have shot a good many in my time. But there is a curious thing about this panther, sahib; look at these holes in his head.'

'Well, those are strange, certainly,' said Fordham, examining the skull. On either side of the occipital ridge were several holes, one as large as a sixpence, through which a probe would have passed to the brain. They were evidently carious, and the result of disease; but in other respects the animal seemed a healthy one, and was in first-rate condition. Fordham told Sheykha to clean the head carefully for him, promising him a present for it, as it would make a valuable addition to his collection on account of the peculiarity just mentioned.

The rest of the day was spent by Milford in trying to make his young bear drink milk, but with small success. The little brute was as savage as his elders, and would do nothing but walk to the end of the string by which he was attached to a tent-peg, roll head over heels, and walk in a contrary direction, when a similar somersault would be performed. And he whined and wailed just like a child; one might have mistaken it for the puling

of some villager's brat. Milford was going to give it pure cow's milk, when Fordham advised him not to do so, but to mix it with one half the quantity of water. "The great mistake people make,' he said, 'who try to rear wild animals is to give them what they think is best for them, viz. good fresh cow's milk, and they wonder that the little creatures pine away and die, instead of flourishing on it. Cow's milk is too rich; buffalo's milk is better, but both should be mixed with water. It does not matter what the animal is, tiger cub, fawn, or baby monkey, all require the same caution.'

Fordham's experience in the nursing of wild animals had been extensive, and he had at that time a pet tiger, now full grown, whose ideas of milk were so connected with his early days that he still insisted on having it in a bottle, and his daily allowance was always administered to him in that way; in fact, he would not have it in a pan, and always showed his disapprobation of such a proceeding by gravely putting his huge paw into the dish and upsetting it.

In the evening, after his office labours were over, Fordham suggested a walk along the borders of the neighbouring jungle, by way of getting up an appetite for dinner; so off they started, with their guns over their shoulders, and one attendant carrying a spare rifle. Their route lay over some fields, beyond which stretched a belt of grazing land plentifully dotted over with bushes, whilst the distance was bounded by a small range of low hills, and it was towards the base of these our friends were bound, in the hope of picking up a young peacock or two, which, at this time of the year, after having fattened on the aromatic buds of the jugnee, are as good eating as Christmas turkey. The larder in camp was not well supplied, and a stray gazelle or bhurki was also hoped

for. But fortune smiled on them, and something better was in store. The country behind them was an open plain for miles, frequented by herds of antelope, and some of them had been seen near the camp.

Milford was questioning his companion about the best method of curing skins, with a view to sending his trophies of the morning home to his widowed mother, who, he knew, would prize them as her son's first victories, and Fordham was deep in an explanation of the method he most approved of, when he suddenly came to a stop, and drew his young comrade behind a palas tree which grew by the side of the path.

'Look there,' he whispered, pointing to what appeared like two black twisted sticks, projecting from the ground like the letter V.

'Yes, yes, what is it?' enquired his excited companion.

'Why, it's a black buck, lying in that small nullah; and a grand fellow he is to judge by his horns. Now, Ernest, will you try your luck at stalking? He does not see us, and if you walk straight up to him he must spring up and give you a clear running shot. He is not more than a hundred yards from us.'

'No, no,' answered Milford, 'it is yours; you saw him first. I would rather see you tackle him; besides which we want meat, and I might fail.'

'All right, I'll soon dispose of him. Now, Ernest, right through the eye;—mark!'

Fordham stepped out from the tree and gave a loud whistle, and, as the startled buck looked up, exposing his noble head as he did so, an ounce ball crashed through his dark eye to the brain, and he sank as he lay, to rise no more.

'Twenty-two inch horns,' remarked Fordham, as he

Right in front of them was a low hill, covered with scrub. This they crossed and struck down into a pretty little glen. They agreed to walk down this for a short distance, and then strike back over the hill and make for camp. Here, however, they met with no success, not a bird or beast came in sight; not that they particularly wished for them, for they had already reason to be satisfied with what they had got; and so they strolled along without much care, talking as they went.

The sun had gone down by this time, and darkness was creeping on apace. There is but little twilight in India. However, we are wrong in saying darkness was creeping on apace, for mingling with the rays of departing day was the silvery light of the moon, now nearly at the full.

'There is a cattle track here somewhere,' remarked Fordham; 'I have noticed it before. Ah! here it is; by following this we cut across the hill and come out right above our camp, and shall just get in in time to do justice to Chand Khan's green-pigeon pie.'

The track was a gravelly path with thick bushes on either side, with here and there a tree; it was not likely cover for anything except nylgaie. The pea-fowl were settling themselves to roost on the branches of the taller trees, to be well out of harm's way, and several times Fordham noticed that the loud cry of 'Hānk! Pa-ōō! Pa-ōō!' was raised. 'The birds are restless to-night,' he said; 'some prowling jungle cat, or maybe a panther, is disturbing them.'

By this time they had reached the crest of the hill, and the white tents were visible in the distance as they lay embedded in the grove of mango trees. Fordham was giving his comrade some useful advice concerning

the carrying of a spare loading rod, in reference to the incidents of the morning. The crisp gravel cracked under their firm footsteps, and the moonbeams were glinting on the bits of quartz and mica that lay strewn around. The twilight was nearly gone, and but a dull-red flush lingered in the western sky. Now and then a nightjar would start up with his peculiar erratic flight from almost under their feet, as he lay squatted close to the ground. The monotonous cry of his species resounded on all sides, resembling the oft-repeated words 'Chukoo! chukoo! chukoo!' Again burst forth the wild call of a peacock perched on a tree not far off. Fordham instinctively threw his rifle across his arm in readiness, knowing well that jungle warnings are not to be disregarded. But he said nothing to Milford, who unconsciously chatted away about the exploits of the morning. There was a slight rustle in the bushes before them, and in the next moment a magnificent tiger stood in the midst of the pathway, looking them full in the face.

'Steady, my boy,' muttered Fordham through his teeth; 'steady, my boy, flinch not a muscle.'

His rifle had dropped into position to fire at once should the brute show any aggressive signs; but he knew it would be folly to provoke an attack, and also that the jungle tiger will, if met boldly, be generally the first to give way. In the bright light of the moon the eyes of the beast glared like pale emeralds, and to Milford it seemed an age of agonizing suspense. But it was only for a few seconds. Another moment and he was gone, and they heard the rustling of the branches as he bounded through the jungle.

'Thank God!' exclaimed the young fellow, with a long-drawn sigh of relief.

'Wait a bit,' said his elder companion; 'before we

go on send down a couple of bullets on the top of your shot; we must be prepared; the chances are he has made off, but there is no knowing. This is a nasty, ugly spot to meet such a brute in, and so unexpectedly too. I thought those pea-fowl did not call for nothing. Now,' continued he, seeing that the bullets were down, 'you keep close to me, but with your look-out to the right and rear. I will look out left and front as we go along. Speak not a word, but keep all your senses awake. Sometimes these brutes will make a detour and come in on you again a little further on. Now, *allons—courage!*'

It seemed a weary trudge, that little quarter of a mile down the hill and out through the belt of jungle, and right thankful were they when they stepped out once more on the open fields that lay between them and their camp.

'That was a close shave, Ernest,' was the first remark made by his companion.

'I'm uncommonly glad we're out of that ugly bit of jungle. If ever I felt inclined to take to my heels it was when that brute stood staring us in the face.'

'The worst thing you could have done, my boy,' rejoined Fordham; 'he would have been down upon you like lightning. The best plan is to bear a bold front, and, though this has been your first meeting with the jungle king, it may not be your last if you stay long in these districts; so be careful never to turn your back when you come face to face with a tiger.'

'Have you ever met them before in this way?' asked Milford.

'Yes, several times; though never quite so close as our friend of this evening. On one occasion I was going down to Nagpore, and I missed a horse at Deolapar, so

the malgoozar said he would take me on in his *khanchar*[1] to Chor Bowlee, where my next nag was posted. Off we started about nine o'clock, a bright moonlight night, my friend the Pathan driving, and his game little bullocks were trotting along at a rattling pace, when suddenly they stopped, and it was with the greatest difficulty their master could prevent them from bolting into the jungle. The cause for their alarm was a tiger, who had calmly taken possession of the road, and who seemed in no hurry to moveon, for he quietly squatted on his hams, waiting, I suppose, for the bullocks to tumble into his jaws. I believe if they had been allowed to bolt the tiger would have been at them at once; but the stout young malgoozar held them with the power of a vice; and I, thinking the situation demanded some sort of demonstration, fired one barrel of a light rifle I carried over the tiger's back. This seemed to astonish him, for he jumped up with a deep 'Oumph!' and bounded into the thicket. On my return from Nagpore I met another tiger, a noted man-eater, at a place called Rookhur on the top of the Koraie Pass, and my horse bolted. It's a tigerish road that between Seonee and Kamptee. I have met them several times there, and have also come across them when out after deer, but on such occasions it has generally resulted in our becoming better acquainted, in a manner not quite to the poor tiger's advantage.'

'Have you ever seen a tiger kill a man?' asked Milford.

'Yes, I am sorry to say; not one, but several. I will give you one story which will last us till we reach camp. It was the first accident of the kind I ever had, and it happened when I was younger than I now am by about

[1] A small country cart.

twelve or fifteen years. I was out in a very beautiful part of the Mundla district, on the look-out for bara singha, or the twelve-tined red deer. There are a good many tigers there too, but not so many as the place has got credit for. But one of them whose beat happened to be near our camp was a noted man-eater. I was with a friend, a district officer, who had a fine elephant, and we hoped to get rid of this tiger as well as secure some fine antlers. Well, we went for him several times without success. At last one morning, my friend having office work to detain him, I went out alone on foot along the banks of the river to look for bara singha. A native shikaree from one of the villages accompanied me, and carried a spare rifle and ammunition bag. We had gone some miles without any success, but from some foot-prints my native friend was getting sanguine, and was pressing on through the brushwood on the river bank, when to our astonishment up got a tiger right in front of us. He was an old, mangy-looking brute, and from his appearance I had no doubt but that I had thus unceremoniously forced myself into the presence of the man-eater we had been diligently searching for all these days.

But then the circumstances were different, and I rather wished myself out of the way at that present moment. However, the situation did not admit of much parleying. Catching tight hold of my dusky friend, whose trembling limbs were on the turning point for flight, we stepped back pace by pace, keeping a front to our foe, who stealthily followed. At a little distance behind us was a good-sized tree, and I thought if we could once reach it we might get into a position of security. Nor was I wrong in supposing that as long as we kept a brave front our cowardly enemy would follow at a respectful distance. Slowly retreating we at last reached the tree.

The shikaree was up like a monkey, nor was I long in following his example. It was not a moment too soon, for hardly had I settled myself on a branch about twelve feet from the ground when our man-eating friend made his appearance, sneaking along with his glaring eyes rolling in all directions to see whereabouts we were. I did not leave him long in doubt, for, as soon as I could get a steady shot, I sent a two-ounce ball crashing through his shoulder. Roaring most horribly he retreated into a small patch of grass, where we could almost see him, and so, for a time, I kept up a vigorous cannonade on this patch. Every report at first was answered by a sullen roar, and then all was silent—no response to any of the shots. I then concluded that he must be dead. The river ran on the further side of the patch, and the country was tolerably open. I confess the thought of his having slipped away appeared to me impossible; still I knew the necessity for caution. So, quietly getting down from the tree, we made our way speedily to the nearest village in hopes of getting some buffaloes, and before we got to it we fell in with a herd. My shikaree soon made a compact with the herdsmen, who for a couple of rupees promised to drive the tiger out of the patch with their animals.'

'Are buffaloes really so fearless of tigers?' asked Milford. 'I have read wonderful accounts of them, but did not know whether they were not travellers' tales.'

'No, they are quite correct,' replied his companion. 'Buffaloes will attack and drive off a tiger, and they not unfrequently save the lives of their keepers. Cows, on the other hand, are quite useless. But to return to my story. As I said before, the patch of grass into which the tiger retreated was just on the bank of the river, and I thought it highly probable that, if he were still alive,

he would break out on the river side and try to cross it; so I determined to be beforehand with him, and, accompanied by the shikaree, crossed at a ford, and proceeded along the bank to a place opposite the patch of grass on the side we had left. There was not much scrub on the bank where we were, hardly enough to hide a hare, but the country sloped down towards the river, and the edge of the watershed was cut up into a lot of small channels by the action of the rains, mere ditches across which we leaped as we ran. I had cleared several of these with my eyes fixed on ahead, lest the brute should, on hearing the advance of the buffaloes, break his cover. We were nearly opposite his supposed lurking-place, and I had just sprung over one of these little nullahs, when a terrific roar and despairing shriek at my very ear electrified me. Trembling with excitement, I turned to see my poor shikaree down in the ditch, with the fiendish tiger worrying him. Quick as lightning, and quite regardless of consequences to myself, I fired blindly at him. Whether I hit him or not it is difficult to say, but he left the poor fellow, and, springing on to the opposite side of the ditch, stood looking at me. I was almost beside myself, and levelling full at his head fired again, but without deadly effect, for he plunged down the bank of the river, and I was too sick at heart to follow him. I sprang to the assistance of my poor follower. It was useless, the man was beyond aid; in fact death must have been almost instantaneous, and his head and face presented such a ghastly object that it haunted me for days afterwards.

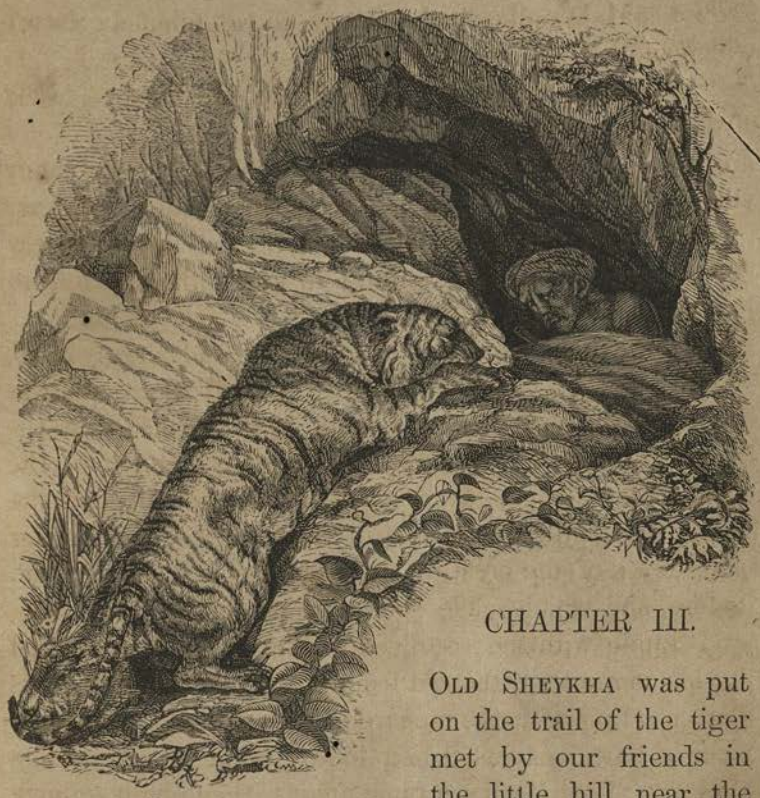
'However, to cut my story short, for here we are at the tent door, the vicious brute had not much longer to live; on my return to camp, my friend eagerly joined me in a hunt for the man-eater, and he was soon found, exhausted and crippled from the wounds I had inflicted,

and was shot, and a nasty, mangy, ill-conditioned creature he was.'

'All man-eaters are mangy, are they not?' asked Milford.

'By no means,' answered Fordham. 'Old mangy tigers often take to man-eating, which they find easy work, but lots of man-eaters I have seen have had very glossy coats; there is nothing in human flesh *per se* to cause mange or other disease.'

So the friends entered their tents, and shortly afterwards emerged ready for dinner. Chand Khan's pie was done ample justice to, and some fresh steaks from the black buck were not despised. The excitement of the evening had by no means damped the appetites of the hunters, but Milford could hardly look back to the glaring green eyes of the creature they had met but a short time before, and which made such a vivid impression on him, and couple with the recollection the tragic story related by his comrade, without a feeling of thankfulness that his first meeting with the monarch of the jungle had passed over as harmlessly as it had done. Some of our readers may say 'Pooh! what a tame affair! they ought to have had a scrimmage.' Stout-hearted friend, reserve your judgment till you have, on a moonlight night in a dense jungle, found yourself face to face with a royal tiger!



CHAPTER III.

Old Sheykha was put on the trail of the tiger met by our friends in the little hill near the camp, and he proceeded to make enquiries in the villages round about as to the character of the animal; for, strange though it may seem to the English reader that a tiger should have any special character beyond the general one for cruelty and cunning, it is nevertheless a fact that each animal has certain peculiarities of temperament, which are well known to the villagers in the neighbourhood. They will tell you that such a one is daring and rash; another is cunning and not to be taken in by any artifice; that one is savage and morose; another is mild and harmless.

There are few villages in the wilder parts of the

Seonee and Mundla districts without an attendant tiger, which undoubtedly does great damage in the way of destroying cattle, but which avoids the human inhabitants of the place. So accustomed do the people get to their unwelcome visitor, that we have known the boys of a village turn a tiger out of quarters which were reckoned too close, and pelt him with stones; on one occasion, two of the juvenile assailants were killed by the animal they had approached too near. Herdsmen, in the same way, get callous to the danger of meddling with so dreadful a creature, and frequently rush to the rescue of their cattle when seized. On a certain occasion, one out of a herd of cattle was attacked close to our camp, and rescued single-handed by its owner, who laid his heavy iron-bound staff across the tiger's back, and, on our rushing out to see what was the matter, we found the man coolly dressing the wounds of his cow, muttering to himself, 'The robber, the robber! my last cow, and I had five of them!' He did not seem to think he had done anything wonderful, and seemed rather surprised that we should suppose that he was going to let his last heifer go the way of all the others.

It is fortunate for these dwellers in the backwoods that but a small percentage of tigers are man-eaters, perhaps not five per cent., otherwise village after village would be depopulated; as it is, the yearly tale of human lives lost is a heavy one.

Sheykha returned from his quest with the report that the tiger was one of the cunning sort, and that it was no use tying out baits for him, for he would come up and walk round the lure, sharpening his claws on the ground, and then would walk off; it had been tried over and over again.

Milford was inclined to disbelieve this latter part of

the story, but Fordham told him it was quite credible, for he had himself known similar cases, and had seen the marks of the tiger's claws in the earth.

'Well, Sheykha, what do you propose? any chance with the elephant?'

'My lord,' answered the old man, 'if your slave may speak, he would say, where can a hungry tiger be found in all this long strip of jungle? Whilst you are looking for him at one end he may be at the other, and, as he is so cunning, it is likely he will flee like a dove before a hawk when he hears the tread of the elephant. They tell me he has not killed for three days, so it is likely he will do so soon—this afternoon, or to-morrow perhaps; and they also say he is a heavy feeder, never returning again to the carcase, for he was once wounded over a kill by a Gond, who sat up for him in a tree. If he eats well, he will drink at the little three-cornered tank on the other side of the hill, where your honour saw him, for there is no water nearer, and he will not go far from there. Then take the elephant.'

'I am afraid we must have patience, Ernest, and do as the old man advises,' said Fordham to his companion, who with the impetuosity of youth could hardly brook the delay.

The old hunter keenly watched the disappointed look that came over the young man's eager face when he again spoke.

'Your slave has a petition. If the chota sahib will try an old shikaree's way of killing tigers, let him come with me this afternoon, and follow the herds. For the promise of a few rupees the herdsmen will take their cattle into the tiger's haunts, and then if he is hungry and takes one the sahib may by his good fortune get a shot.'

'Well, Ernest, what do you think of his proposal?

You drive a herd of cows—not buffaloes, mind, they spoil sport—slowly through the jungle, until the tiger seizes one; the rest will bolt, and whilst he is busily engaged in struggling with his victim, you creep up to within easy shooting distance, and secure him.'

'Well, that will be glorious fun! By all means let us go,' eagerly replied the excited young fellow.

'I cannot go with you,' replied Fordham. 'Two of us would spoil sport. Let Sheykha take his matchlock, he may serve you at a pinch. The thing is not so dangerous as it looks, and is often practised by native shikarees. There are only two or three points I would impress upon you; always keep near a tree or stout bush, to dodge behind when the cattle bolt—for there will be a regular stampede if he comes out. Again, be very careful not to expose yourself in stalking him—take advantage of every bush, and, after you have fired, keep as still as a mouse, even though he should come towards your hiding-place; if you are effectually concealed, he will be quite bewildered as to where the attack comes from, and will give you a second shot if the first does not settle him. Above all, my dear boy, keep yourself quite cool. I want you to get self-reliant, and that is one reason why I don't go with you. You couldn't have a better guide amongst natives than old Sheykha—he and Soma, the Lebhana,[1] are the most successful practisers of this way of killing tigers. I have tried it, but dislike the monotony of wandering about all day in the jungle after a lot of cows, for frequently the attempt fails, and you have to go day after day before you succeed.'

'When are we to start?' said Milford, looking at his watch; 'it is now one o'clock.'

Sheykha, on being appealed to, said that as soon as

[1] Soma, the gipsy.

the sahib had taken something to eat it would be time to go. Tigers often kill about four o'clock in the afternoon, and he had known them wait concealed in the midst of a herd, with fat kine wandering before their very noses, and they would not stir till about the evening, when the herd was on its way home, and then a straggling heifer or calf would fall a victim.

'Well, then, Ernest, I advise you to make a good tiffin before you start. Here! *Koi hai*! tiffin! tiffin! sharp!'

Away ran two or three men to stir up stout old Chand Khan. The sahib wanted his tiffin at once, and was going to kill the big tiger that nearly ate him and the chota sahib up the night before.

'Bah!' contemptuously replied the old fellow; 'is the sahib's gun a chowkeedar's staff that he should let a tiger eat him? Wasn't I with him in the Belaspore district when four tigers came out, and didn't the sahib knock over two of them with one gun right and left? Don't talk to me of tigers eating the sahib; it's the sahib who eats the tigers, that's what it is;' and the fat old fellow, chuckling at his own conceit, stirred up a savoury curry preparatory to pouring it out into a dish.

Chand Khan was a character in his way. Though he did all the cooking, he was nominally the khansamah, and was always respectfully addressed as such by the other servants, who knew that even the title *khalifa jee*, high though its origin, would in all probability fetch a crack over the head with a ladle; and so *khansamah jee* he was. There never was a better cook, nor one who could make so much out of little, and in all weathers, under all circumstances. It did not matter how long the march, and whether the kitchen tent was up or not—Chand Khan could always, as his master said, make potatoes out of stones, and cutlets out of bark chips.

Milford was too excited to care much about tiffin, and on this occasion we are afraid Chand Khan's culinary skill did not meet with that appreciation from the young man that it would have done had there not been a prospect of a tiger hunt that afternoon. Sheykha had no need to complain of delay, for, barely giving himself time for a cutlet and a glass of cold water, the young sportsman appeared all ready for the encounter.

'That white hat of yours will never do, Ernest,' remarked Fordham; 'why, that Brobdignagian mushroom, though first-rate for the sun, will be as plain to the tiger as a lighthouse on a cliff. Ride in it by all means, but take this dark-grey helmet of mine to put on when you get to your ground.'

Milford acknowledged the force of his friend's remarks, for his hat was one of the largest-sized pith sunshades,[1] a first-rate thing for howdah work, but fatal for stalking.

He accepted Fordham's offer with thanks, and then having looked to his guns, ammunition, &c., piloted by old Sheykha, the tyro in tiger hunting went off on his expedition.

At the farthest point of the low hill, where they had met the animal the evening before, was a small village, and to this Sheykha rapidly led the way; and, on arrival, he assembled the head men for a palaver. The herds had been driven for pasturage to the open side of the village, in order to avoid the tiger, who was known to be lurking about the edge of the jungle on the side of the hill. There was some little opposition to the plan proposed by the old shikaree, which was to drive their cattle up the little glen between the two parallel ridges. Of course nobody wished to lose a cow, although all wished to

[1] Indian sun hats are usually made of a white pith called 'Sola.'

have the tiger destroyed. At last it was made clear to them that the full value of the cow killed would be paid to the owner, and a present given to the herdsmen besides. On this there was a unanimous assent, and half the village rushed off to collect the scattered herds, and drive them up the glen. Milford got off his pony and left it at the village, changing his mushroom hat for the grey helmet, and, shouldering one rifle (Azim Khan carrying the other), he joined Sheykha and the herdsmen in urging on the drove. After they had once entered the mouth of the glen the cattle were allowed to spread and graze about, and Sheykha advised his temporary master to take it easy and rest under the shade of a tree.

'There is no need to hurry,' said he in a low tone; 'we must take time and saunter about as on ordinary occasions, otherwise he will suspect something. Allah knows he may be watching us now' ('Pleasant!' thought Milford, taking a glance round), 'but even if he is not here, the lowing of the cows and the sound of their wooden clappers will attract him. The herd is all round us just now; when they move higher up we will follow.'

So saying, the old man motioned to Milford to sit down on the turf, and then squatted down beside him. One could see, however, that with all this apparent carelessness every sense was on the alert; his eye wandered round, and his ear caught every rustle in the bushes. Once he rose, but it was only to drag down a branch of the tree under which they were sitting, a species of *Lagerstræmia*, and to detach from it what appeared to Milford to be a kind of oval fruit attached to a slender stalk. The old man was stowing it away in his wallet, when he was asked what it was.

'This,' said he, producing the supposed fruit, 'is the cocoon of the Tusser silk moth; I cut it spirally into a

long strip, after soaking it in water, and use it for binding the barrel of my matchlock to the stock. There is nothing so tough as this is. See, sahib, here is another, which I have broken off twig and all. See, there is the round cocoon like a fruit, then a long stalk, and this is spun round the twig so tightly at the end that it looks like the fruit of the tree instead of the home of an insect.'

'How do they take the silk off?' enquired Milford.

'By softening the cocoon in boiling water, when they reel off the silk. Now, sahib,' continued he, seeing the herd had moved higher up, 'we will go on a little. Make for that *rohnee* tree; there is good shade and shelter from the cattle if they rush back.'

The herdsmen kept pretty close to our friends, so a little knot of half a dozen men were formed under the tree. They spoke but little, and that in a low tone, and the greater share of the conversation fell to the old shikaree, who, with the garrulity of age, began to relate to the gaping rustics several wondrous tales connected with the kind of sport on which they were then engaged.

'I first began this way, sahib, when I was a boy, with an old shikaree who never lifted gun to anything but tigers. They were his enemies, and he slept neither day nor night if there was one to be killed. He was quite mad, and the people thought he had a charmed life, but his fate came at last, and he was killed. He was not of a shikaree caste, being a telee, and he never fired a gun till he was over thirty years of age; but Allah made him a shikaree to avenge the death of his wife. She was young and very handsome, and he would have cut off his right hand to please her. No telee's wife was ever treated so much like a Rānee as was this woman; it used to be the joke of the village. Well, sahib, about three coss from his village was the strong-

hold of a very bad man-eating tiger; he had depopulated several villages, and had baffled all the best shikarees. He lived in a big cave at the end of a rocky ravine, and there was no getting at it except by going straight for it; at the same time the rocks were so piled about, that an animal like a tiger could enter the ravine some hundreds of paces below, and thread his way through the boulders without being seen. All the traps that had been laid for him had proved useless, and the people said he was a *shaitan* in the form of a tiger.

'Well, one afternoon, Rajoo, the telee's wife, went down to the nullah to bathe, and she never returned. Her distracted husband rushed to the bathing-place, and it was but too apparent she had been carried off. There were the footprints of the tiger in the sand; a little further on a gay-coloured cloth, now marked with the deeper stains of blood. The man went mad; he would have rushed off to the tiger's cave there and then had not his friends held him back. For three days he raved, and would take no food. At last he got calmer, and people thought he would get over it, and the old women began to cast their eyes about for another wife for him, for Urjoon, telee, was well-to-do in the world according to their notions. But he disappointed them, and the villagers were astonished to hear that he had sold his oil-mill and bullocks to a rival telee, and was going off to Seonee. He could not live in the village, he said; the ghost of Rajoo haunted him. So to Seonee he went, and when he got there the half of his money he laid out in the best matchlock he could get—this very matchlock which I carry; I bought it from his people for the price of two tigers[1]—then he laid in a stock of ammunition and went off.

[1] Forty rupees, or 4*l*. At that time the Government reward for tigers

'Well, after three weeks had elapsed, the people of his village were surprised by Urjoon walking into the little square in front of the Putail's house, where all the punchayets are held, and where one was being held that day. They hardly recognised him at first, he was so gaunt and wild-looking. Over his shoulder he carried a long matchlock; from his belt depended a powder horn and wallet, and in his hand he held a bundle composed of a fresh tiger skin. Could this be the sleek, respectable telee, Urjoon, who would have fled from the butt of a he-goat? this wild-eyed, long-haired shikaree? His own brethren hardly knew him; but they recognised his voice when he spoke.

'"My brothers," said he, unrolling the tiger skin and disclosing a ghastly skull and half-gnawed bones, mingled with black tresses and gold and silver ornaments, "these are the bones of Rajoo; burn them decently, and I will carry the ashes to Nerbudda Mai." So saying he stalked into his own house.

'The needful ceremonies were performed. Urjoon silently went through them, shaving his head and distributing alms to the priests; but there was a fire in his eye that the people could not understand. "The spirit of the tiger has entered into him," they said; and the maidens and children shrank from him as he approached.

'The evening before his departure for the Nerbudda he called his friends together at the punchayet's *chabootra*; he had arrayed himself again like a shikaree, and the tiger-skin bundle was in his hand.

'"My brothers," commenced he, when all were seated, "I am going to Nerbudda Mai, and when you will see me again Purmessur only knows; but before I

was twenty rupees; afterwards it was reduced to ten, and then again raised to fifty rupees.

go I will open my mouth. The bones you have burnt are Rajoo's; her ashes I go to cast into the great mother's bosom, and she will be happy. This skin is the skin of her destroyer; you can now till your fields in peace, and sleep in safety by the side of your maize plots. My brothers, when I went to Seonee I bought me this matchlock, and Purmessur has taught me how to use it. I fear no tiger now; they fall before me like the mango at which the boy throws his stick. The ghost of Rajoo called me, and I followed. Seven bullets did I put into my gun—seven bullets and eight fingers' depth of powder. Three days I waited on the edge of the ravine; at last the ghost of Rajoo beckoned me on. I followed—ay, followed her into the man-eater's cave. It was paved with bones, and I knew the bones of Rajoo; there were the silver anklets, and the gold husli I had given her, and the long hair still clinging to the skull. She smiled as I gathered them together in a heap. 'Yes,' said I to myself, 'in the skin of your destroyer will I carry you back.' Hours I waited, but he came not. Food nor drink had passed my lips those three days. I thirsted only for vengeance. At last I heard a heavy breathing and a scrambling noise. The next minute he darkened the mouth of the cave. How his eyes glared as they met mine! but I was not afraid. He was, and crouched, and snarled, but I smote him, my brothers. With seven balls in his chest and brain I smote him, and took off his skin to wrap my Rajoo's bones in. I have said my say. I will go."

'So saying he shouldered his matchlock and turned his back on his native village, and never went near it again. Years after that I met him, and he took a fancy to me, and made a shikaree of me. But Allah knows he was quite mad. On one occasion I went out with him, when—— ah! sahib, be ready, hush!'

The old man's quick ear had caught the angry chirrup of a small bird, which would have passed unnoticed by the others. Milford looked around in silent expectancy; all seemed still save for the sound of warbling birds, and the clatter of the wooden clappers worn round the neck by some of the cows. They were all quietly grazing, and the young man wondered what could have attracted the old shikaree's notice. Sheykha was still attentively listening, and nodding his head. 'Yes,' he said, 'it is, I think. Allah knows it may be a snake, or a mungoose, but something is disturbing that latora; it is the tiger, I think.'

At some distance off, on the topmost spray of a grislea bush, a small species of shrike[1] was hopping about, indignantly chattering. It might be, as Sheykha said, a snake or a mungoose that had aroused its puny ire, but the old man evidently thought it worthy of attention. Milford felt impatient and disappointed; the shadows were lengthening, and daylight would soon be gone. He looked up and down, but all was provokingly quiet. A lingering hope remained that Sheykha might be right about the bird, but even it was quiet now, and had ceased its demonstrations. Nothing disturbed the stillness save the clapper-clapper of the cattle, and a distant cry of a pea-fowl or partridge. He had risen to his feet, and was looking listlessly about, when, at some little distance up the glen, a yellow mass suddenly dashed out of the thicket on to the back of a white heifer, and bore it struggling to the ground.

'Urré! bāgh! bāgh!' shouted the herdsmen, as the cattle wildly dashed down the valley. For a few seconds nothing could be heard for the crashing of the bushes, as the terror-stricken drove madly careered

[1] Small brown shrike, *Lanius cristatus*.

through them. When they had passed the tree Sheykha whispered, 'Now, sahib, keep yon big palas bush between you and the tiger, and run up; here, give me the other rifle, Azim Khan, and you stay here. Don't you show yourself, or you may get killed.'

The palas bush was about sixty yards from them, and, running in a crouching position, they got behind it. Carefully separating the branches, the old hunter peered through, and beckoned to his young companion to do so. Milford looked through the gap thus made, and could see the poor heifer kicking vigorously as it lay on its side, pressed down under the weight of its cruel captor, whose fangs were buried in its throat. Both tiger and heifer lay with their backs turned to the two men, which was favourable, for the distance was yet too great for a certain shot. Signing to Milford to follow by his side, the old man darted off at right angles, so as to bring another big bush between them and the struggling animals; up to this they ran again, crouching as they went, and again the old hunter peered through the leaves. Milford could hear the last groans of the poor heifer, and the stertorous breathing of the tiger, for they were now within forty yards. Old Sheykha noiselessly removed a few of the broad leaves of the palas, and Milford looking through almost started at the sight, so near did the tiger appear. He raised his rifle, but Sheykha quietly laid a hand upon his arm, and shaking his head drummed with his fingers upon his heart, and, touching the muzzle of the weapon, tremulously shook them in the air, thus signifying in pantomime—for they were too near to allow of speech—that his nerves were not steady enough for a shot. In truth Milford's nerves were anything but steady just then; his heart panted with excitement and the exertion of running in a crouching posture,

and Sheykha was wise in not allowing him to risk a shot. The old man knew there was no immediate need for hurry, and the sight was too familiar to him to cause that rapid circulation of the blood that existed at that moment in the veins of the young Englishman.

At last the tiger shifted his position, and lay on the top of the heifer, with one massive fore-arm stretched out, holding down one of his victim's fore legs, whilst his jaws were still firmly fixed in its throat.

Nothing could be more favourable than the posture, exposing as it did the most vital part. So Sheykha turned to Milford, and, patting his heart once more, made signs of enquiry whether he was steady. The young man nodded assent.

Pointing in the direction of the tiger, the shikaree placed his hand on his side, just under the arm, as a hint where to aim, and a placid smile came over his face as he saw the deadly tube levelled with a steadiness that was all that could be desired. In another moment the bright flash leapt forth, and the stricken tiger sprang from his victim with an angry roar, and turned round and round, snapping at his side in a rage.

Sheykha pressed a firm nervous hand on Milford's arm, for at these times, reader, when life and death hang on a trifle, there is a cessation of that obsequious deference which is usually paid by the native to the European, and though Sheykha would have refrained from any interference or suggestion with such an experienced shikaree as Fordham, he knew Milford was but a novice and a boy, and he was in great measure responsible for his safety.

At last the tiger stopped, and looked wildly round as if he were undecided where to go; he was evidently badly hit, for the blood was beginning to pour from his

mouth. Milford at this moment fired again, and, just as he did so, the beast made a bound in the direction of the bush where they were, but checked as it were in his spring, he fell flat on the ground with all four paws spread out, and was unable to rise; his hind legs were paralysed, and helplessly he writhed, roaring most horribly. His close proximity made the young Englishman almost shudder; he was not more than twenty yards away, and he fancied he could almost smell the creature's breath.

It was evident that the tiger's spine was broken by the last shot, and his sufferings were painful to witness. In his agony he seized one of his own paws and bit it through and through, and he tore up the turf around with his claws as far as he could reach. At last, taking his second gun from Sheykha, Milford gave him the *coup de grâce*. The first ball aimed at his head missed, but the second entered just behind the ear, and with a single groan the fell destroyer breathed his last.

At this moment Fordham made his appearance on the elephant, and congratulated his young friend on his victory.

'I thought I would come and look after you, my boy,' he said, 'in case you might want help in searching for a wounded tiger; but I stayed near the village so as not to interfere with your sport till I heard your shots, and I am glad you have been so successful without my aid. Ay, Sheykha, he's a fine heavy beast, that?'

'Burra, kutt-ha bāgh, khodawund, khoob bhari walla.'

To Milford he seemed enormous, and his heart swelled with pride at his success, though he was honest enough to lay much of it to the credit of the old shikaree; still, as far as the shooting was concerned, it was all his own, and

he thought how proud his mother would be when he wrote her an account of what had passed; and there was also a passing thought of what a certain fair-haired girl —a neighbouring squire's daughter, who lived not far from his English home—would think of the tiger hunter whom, a few months before, she used rather to patronise as a boy, in the usual way in which sweet seventeen regards the young lover of twenty.

'Nine feet ten inches,' said Fordham, rolling up his pocket tape.

'That is not anything very great, is it?' asked Milford, his face showing some disappointment. 'I should have taken him to be ten or twelve feet; he looks such a monster.'

'So he is, my dear Ernest, a very big tiger, and if all tigers were measured honestly, a twelve-foot animal would never be heard of. All your big fellows are measured from stretched skins, and are as exaggerated as are the accounts of the dangers incurred in killing them, at least in many cases. But even the true method of measuring the unskinned animal is faulty; it is an apparent fact that a tail has very little to do with the worthiness of a creature, otherwise our bull-dogs would have their caudal appendages left in peace. Now every shikaree knows that there may be a heavy tiger with a short tail and a light-bodied one with a long tail. Yet the measurement of each would be equal, and gives no criterion as to the size of the brute. Here's this tiger of yours; I call him a heavy one—twenty-eight inches round the fore-arm and big in every way. Yet his measurement does not sound large, and, had he six inches more tail, he would gain immensely by it in reputation. The biggest panther I ever shot had a stump only six inches long, and, according to the usual system of

measuring, he would have read as being a very small creature indeed.'

Whilst this measurement and chat were going on the elephant had been down to the village, and the howdah was taken off there. She now returned with only a pad on her back, and on this the dead tiger was lifted to be carried home.

'My dear Ernest,' said Fordham, as they walked home, 'you are getting quite a shikaree; two bears yesterday and a tiger this evening is luck that does not fall to a single gun every day. I hope your good star will be equally in the ascendant to-morrow morning, for I propose going after sambur before daybreak, so as to catch them as they return from their nightly forays on the crops. The moon is about right now and will give us light till dawn, and there are some fine antlered stags in these low hills. I want some sambur skins for my leggings, and the man who cures them for me has no more in hand.'

'I should like to see a sambur,' rejoined Milford. 'I have never seen one yet.'

'Well, I hope your wish will be gratified to-morrow. Perhaps the American wapiti may be a handsomer animal on account of its horns, but I know of no finer sight than a noble sambur stag; his size and majestic carriage combine to make him the king of the Indian deer. His horns are certainly wanting in tines, for there are only two at the top, with a brow antler at the base of each; but they are graceful in sweep and curvature, and are frequently massive and of large size. One pair I have measure three feet five inches along the curve. The bara singha, or twelve-tined red deer, is smaller, and his horns are not nearly so graceful as those of the European red deer: there is an angular branchiness about them which is ugly.'

'They are difficult to stalk, are they not?' enquired Milford.

'Very; it is no easy matter to stalk an old sambur stag fairly. Many of them are killed by driving them with beaters as we drove the hill the other day when the boar got into the nets; only that nets are not used on such occasions. The marksmen post themselves in convenient spots, and the deer are driven past; but I do not like the plan and never join in "hānks" for sambur if I can possibly avoid it. There is more excitement in running one down with dogs and spearing him as the Gonds do, for then the poor creature has a chance for life and dies gallantly standing at bay. You must get Soma, the Lebhana, to get up a party for you in the rains; he cannot join in the sport now himself, poor fellow, for he is lame, but his people are keen hunters, and the Bunjara dogs are noted.'

Chand Khan had prepared a glorious dinner for hungry sportsmen by the time they arrived at the tents, and they were fully inclined to do ample justice to it.

Long before the crows' dawn, whilst the moon was shining brightly, about three o'clock in the morning, the sentry at Fordham's door woke up Nusseer Khan, who, in his turn, woke his master's bearer, who again went off to wake his lord; Old Chand Khan being the next person to whom Nusseer Khan administered his attentions. 'Khansamah jee! ay Huzrut! get up quickly, the sahib wants his coffee! hey Khansamah jee!'

'Oumph! who are you? what do you want? Be off, son of a bad father! don't bother me.' So saying, the peppery old fellow rolled over on the other side.

Nusseer Khan then diverted his attack to one of the minor fry, to whom he used less ceremony, and, catching hold of a sleeping khidmutgar by the shoulder, shook

him vigorously. 'Hi! get up, the sahib wants you; get up! get up!' The man jumped up with a grunt, sat up for a few minutes, dreamily gazing about him, rubbed his eyes, yawned, and finally got on his feet, without saying a word.

'Now, brother, are you awake?' exclaimed the impetuous peon. 'The sahib will be out in a minute, and there'll be a *toofān* if his tea is not ready.'

The man looked at him again and yawned once more, and then quietly, without a word, began to kindle a fire with a few small sticks.

Nusseer Khan had hardly done speaking when the stout old khansamah, who was now fairly roused, sat up, and gave vent to a yawn which opened a mouth capacious enough to have taken down the elephant, howdah and all, which performance wound up with a prolonged groan, terminating with the pious ejaculation: 'Bismillah! al rehman al raheem!' After which he seemed to be better, and, unrolling himself from the folds of a comfortable *rezai*, began to stir himself amongst the pots and pans.

As the chapprassee walked back, he noticed lights in both the tents where the sahibs were; so, giving a rousing shake to a brother peon, who lay encased in his blanket under one of the flies of his master's tent, he went off to the village to call the Gond who was to be their guide.

In about half an hour the party stood all ready to start—the two Englishmen with their attendants, Nusseer Khan and Azim Khan, and a little, thin, wiry-looking Gond, whose poaching propensities had given him a fair knowledge of the '*runs*' usually taken by the sambur in their nightly journeys between the forest and the fields. He had no notion of giving fair play, and of stalking according to the English fashion, and it was quite beyond

his weak mind why the *sahib logue* should take so much trouble. He selected a likely run, and built himself a little ambush of branches, underneath which he lay snugly concealed till the deer almost walked up to the muzzle of his matchlock; and why the sahibs could not do the same was a mystery, but they never would listen to his advice. However, he could show them the runs, and then they must settle with the sambur.

Two horses were saddled, but both Fordham and his companion preferred to walk, especially as the morning was chilly; and so, telling the Gond to go on ahead, they set forth. They had to cross by the same cattle path where they had met the tiger the night but one before, and then down through the little valley, and on through a belt of thick scrub-jungle which clothed the rise; beyond this again lay an open plain of highly cultivated country, which during the night was frequented by the deer for the sake of the young green crops, which, in spite of careful watching, they considerably despoiled. In England and other civilised countries, nay, even in the greater part of Bengal and the north-west, the husbandman ploughs and sows his land, and waits patiently for the appointed time of harvest, his only enemies being the weeds against which to wage war; at all events he gets his rest at night comfortably in his own cot. But the poor Gond has to toil night as well as day; from the time the green shoots appear above ground he builds himself a little wigwam in the midst of his field, or a platform on high poles, from whence he can keep watch and ward against deer and bison and wild pigs; and he constructs ingenious rattles of two standard poles and two cross pieces; from the top one of the latter depend three or four swinging bars, which, when pulled by a string, rattle against the lower batten. These rattles are placed in

each corner of a field and are tugged at in turn, but in spite of them the crops close to the jungle suffer not a little.

About an hour's brisk walking brought them out over the crest of the second range of hills, just overlooking the plain. At the base of the range was a belt of uncultivated land, much covered with bushes, with here and there a winding path like a sheep track. To one of these the Gond led them, and pointing said, 'Yehi acha mohree hai, sahib' (this is a good run, sahib). His advice, that they should make an ambush of branches and squat behind them, not being met with approval, they determined to wait till daylight, and then scout along the base of the range. The morning star was already glimmering near the horizon, and dawn was not far off. They sat down behind a bush so as to hide themselves for a time, and waited patiently, or rather we should say impatiently, for this waiting in the cold, damp morning was anything but agreeable. However, it was not for long they were so tried. The morning breeze, harbinger of daybreak, came sighing through the branches overhead; the clear notes of the koel rang through the woods, and the distant whoop of the entellus monkey, or call of the pea-fowl, became more frequent as the grey streaks broadened in the east.

'I think there is just light enough to distinguish a deer now,' whispered Fordham. 'Perhaps we had better move down towards the fields, but we must move with caution; luckily the wind is in our favour. The horses must be left here in the thicket.'

Giving a few instructions in a low tone, Fordham led the way, the others following.

Before they had gone very far they heard the distant bell of a stag, which gave them promise, and they pro-

ceeded with still more caution, in Indian file. Suddenly their leader stopped and dropped behind a bush, motioning to the others to crouch, and beckoning Milford to his side.

'Look there,' he whispered, pointing through a gap in the bush.

Milford looked and saw a large deer approaching with cautious steps, within easy rifle range. He clutched his piece with excitement, when his elder companion held up his hand, saying—

'Nay, Ernest, my boy, 'tis only a hind, and not worthy of your aim; wait a bit, there is a stag with her to a certainty; she is but a scout. I hope, however, she won't come straight upon us; if she does we must manage to turn her, for if she once gets wind of us we may say good-bye to both of them.'

The hind was coming apparently straight towards them, stopping every now and then with her large bell-shaped ears advanced, then looking back to the point from which the hunters argued her mate would appear.

Fordham beckoned to the Gond to approach, which he did by worming himself along the ground. A low-toned conversation took place, on which the dusky savage nodded and grinned like a cat. After satisfying himself by another look that the hind was really coming straight for their place of concealment, he bent down close to the ground, and imitated to the life the short, sharp bark of the little grey fox.

The deer suddenly stopped and listened; all was still. She petulantly struck her sharp hoofs against the ground and snorted, but hearing nothing more, she cast a distrustful look at the bush and slowly moved off at an angle. Their attention had been so fixed on her motions that they hardly noticed the advance of the stag, which

came leisurely up the slope from the fields in the wake of his consort, now and again stopping to cull a berry from a beyr bush, or scratch his shaggy sides with his massive antlers. Now he stood broadside on, a picture of animal beauty. In height he was about fourteen hands, Galloway size. His dark-brown hide, wet with the morning mists, seemed almost black; his mossy neck, clothed with bristling hair, and his long sweeping antlers, gave him an air of grandeur which Milford had never seen before in the deer of the parks, or even in Landseer's noble pictures. Here was, as it were, the lion amongst deer, less of the usual grace of the tribe, but majestic beyond his conceptions. The boy was in quite a fever of excitement, lest such a noble quarry should escape, yet he was out of correct shooting range, and evidently he was coming no nearer, for, taking his cue from the hind, he shaped his course to the left of their place of ambush.

'Ay, that's a grand stag,' remarked Fordham; 'I wish I had him headed for the plains with Cossack under me; but we must try and circumvent him somehow before he gets into cover.'

A few hundred yards behind them was a small nullah, fringed with dwarf jamoon[1] and grislea bushes. If they could gain this unseen, they might creep along the bed till they could cross the track the deer were taking. Bidding his followers to lie close, and Milford to follow his example, he flung himself full length on the ground, and, taking advantage of a slight inequality, began to drag himself along in a direction diametrically opposite to that taken by the stag. Milford followed as well as he could, but his heart was rather against widening the distance, and his impatience was aggravated by

[1] *Eugenia jambolana.*

the slow progress made by such a snaky sort of locomotion. However, though he groaned in spirit, he had faith in Fordham, and toiled away in silence.

At last the nullah was reached; and, bending low, they set off with rapid strides in the direction of the forest. After going some distance, Fordham stopped to reconnoitre. He chose for this a place where the bushes were [illegible] thick, and, worming his way through them, found himself face to face with the hind, who stared at him with astonishment for a moment, and then, uttering a short cry of alarm, dashed into the thicket.

'Come on, Ernest, come on,' whispered his companion, setting off at a run. Off they set, as hard as their legs could carry them; but a clattering amongst the stones, and crashing of branches, told them that the stag had taken alarm; and indeed they once got sight of his dark form as he dashed into the forest.

'Hold hard, my boy, hold hard; there is no use your pumping yourself by a run up that hill. He's off—more's the pity, for he was a fine fellow, and we shall never see a hair of him again.'

'Confound that wretched hind!' exclaimed the young man, dashing his hat on the ground, and sitting down on a stone to recover his breath. 'I had set my heart on that stag, he was such a glorious fellow. Is there no way of getting hold of him?'

'None at all; we must put up with our disappointment. But come along; he is not the only stag in these hills. I am going to walk along the edge of the jungle, and then turn the point of the hill and come down the valley till we again strike our homeward path, and, as the sun is not up yet, we may still get a straggler from the fields.'

Whistling for his followers, Fordham took a look

round with his glasses, but without effect. However, nothing disheartened, cheerfully telling his young friend not to think too much of his disappointment, they were once more on their way, and they were rewarded ere long, for before they had gone half a mile they came upon another stag, who was quietly rubbing his horns against a tree, and Milford, who was the first to see him, got within easy distance, and dropped him with a single shot through the heart. He was a younger one than the last, but had fine horns nevertheless, and Milford's spirits revived with his success.

Leaving Azim Khan to look after the carting home of the deer, the friends went on skirting the hill till they rounded the point, and took their way down the glen which they had before crossed, and at the farthest end of which Milford had shot the tiger.

It was a most enjoyable morning, cool and fresh. The sun had risen, and every spray sparkled with a thousand dewdrops. From all sides came the gladsome songs of birds—the plaintive notes of bush warblers, and the louder calls of the pea-fowl and painted partridge; the cheerful cry of the latter struck the sportsmen as they stepped over the dewy sward.

'What is it that you people think this bird says?' asked Fordham of Nusseer Khan.

'Khodawund, they say it repeats a prayer every morning at sunrise: "Ya Soobhan! teri koodrut! ya Soobhan! teri koodrut!" (Oh merciful one! thy beneficence!)'

'Rather far-fetched, but still a pretty idea,' rejoined his master, speaking in English to his companion.

'What sort of a bird is it?' asked Milford.

'A very pretty partridge, or Francolin, for it belongs to that genus of partridges. The upper part of its body,

head, and neck are, generally speaking, brown—of course there are various shades—and the breast is black, with white spots. At this time of the morning you may often find it perched on a low branch, a stump, or ant-hill, making this peculiar call.'

As they walked up the glen it got gradually narrower, and also rose slightly towards the middle, and at last they found themselves on a saddleback as it is termed, a watershed being on either side. The wood was denser here, and the trees somewhat larger, and conspicuous among them was a large ficus in fruit, and now thronged with birds of all kinds. Our friends were watching the curious, awkward motions of several large hornbills, and the eccentric way in which they separated the fruit and tossed it up in the air, catching it with a snap and swallowing it whole; and Fordham was giving Milford some account of the habits of the creature, how the male plasters up his mate during the incubating season in a hole with mud, and feeds her attentively till she is ready to come out with her brood.

At this moment they heard a crash in the bushes behind them, and a clatter of loose stones.

Fordham wheeled sharp round, and, almost at the same moment, as he sighted a break in the wood, he pitched his rifle forward and fired.

'What is it? what is it?' eagerly demanded Milford, as he heard some large animal vigorously kicking and struggling in the underwood.

'A stag,' replied his comrade, 'and, if I mistake not, it is our friend of this morning. I had just time to draw a bead on his shaggy neck. Come along.'

They ran up the hill, and as they approached it the gallant animal staggered on to his feet, and looked wildly at them, as if he were going to charge. His eye rolled

with excitement, the suborbital sinus being widely distended; the bristles of his neck stood out and greatly enhanced the fierceness of his appearance. But all this display was but momentary; he fell heavily over and gave vent to some of the most piercing screams that ever shocked the human ear.

Milford was horrified and put his hands to his ears. He had no idea such sounds could proceed from the throat of a deer. Fordham too seemed shocked, and motioned to Nusseer Khan to put the poor beast out of his misery. The Pathan sprang forward, and a stroke of his keen knife silenced the poor animal for ever.

'It is such things as these and the mute reproach of a dying stag's eye,' said the elder hunter, 'that often make one ashamed of oneself, and declare that one will never pull trigger again at a deer. But I must say it is not common to hear a stag scream as this one did.'

'It was horrible!' exclaimed Milford; 'I had no idea they could make such a noise.'

'Well, the poor beast was shot, as you see, through the root of the neck, and that may have had something to do with it. I have shot many stags, but I never heard such screams before.'

'He is a magnificent creature,' remarked Milford, musingly; 'he is much bigger than mine. I am sure, Fordham, this is the stag we saw first.'

'I think it is,' said his companion. 'There was a hind with him; in fact I saw the hind first as she led the way across the gap, and so was prepared for him to follow. You shall have the head of this fellow for your mother, Ernest, if you think she would like to have it, but I am sure she would prefer the one of your own shooting, and its head is nearly as good.'

'I wish it were,' rejoined the youth; 'but if you

don't mind parting with it, Fordham, and will allow me to be greedy, I should like to have it, and will try to stuff the head.'

'All right, my boy, it is yours with pleasure, and, if you want assistance in stuffing, there is Moula, my factotum, who has been on leave for two months, and has just returned to Seonee; he will help you in the skinning and curing. He is a good hand at these things; I taught him myself, and he has been an apt pupil.'

'I shall be glad to avail myself of his superior knowledge. But who is Mr. Moula? I never heard of him before.'

'That is because he has been away; otherwise Moula, or the Lalla-jee as he is called, is one of the greatest personages in my camp. I picked him up some years ago, and I will tell you how as we go along. Here, Nusseer Khan, we shall ride home, so you and the Gond had better arrange about bringing home the sambur. Well,' continued Fordham, as they rode slowly down the glen, 'I picked up the Lalla at Sasseram, where I was some time ago quartered with a detachment of my regiment. Having little or nothing to do during the day, and not being given, like many of my brother officers, to sleeping away spare time, I took up natural history as a study, and employed several men to catch birds for me, which they do with birdlime on a rod like a fishing-rod; you have seen them, have you not?'

'No, I cannot say I have,' replied Milford.

'Well, I dare say you will some day come across a man with a long slender bamboo in joints, like a light trout rod, and a basket not unlike a fishing basket, and sometimes a shield of green leaves, and you will know him for a professional bird-catcher. You will see him watch a bulbul or a myna to a tree. Silently he creeps

up, and, sheltering himself behind his target of leaves, he smears the top joint of his rod with birdlime, made from the milky juice of the bur tree[1] boiled with oil. Then he adds on joint to joint, cautiously pushing the whole up till within a few inches of the unsuspecting bird. A rapid dart and the thing is done. Down comes the fluttering prisoner, if not attached to the stick at any rate within easy distance; for so viscid is the birdlime that flight is out of the question. Well, I had several of these fellows; and one day, as I was riding along the road, I met my man Moula, then to me a stranger, with his basket and apparatus and a couple of fine merlins. I immediately entered into a conversation, in the course of which I found out that he was a touch above the common herd—in fact he was a catcher and trainer of hawks and falcons; so I asked him if he would enter my service, to which he agreed. After a time, I found that he had a soul even above hawks, for he used to come back in the evening with an empty bag, but his head full of tigers, which he had been tracking in the jungle lands just above Sasseram. So he then became my tiger shikaree, and many a close shave we had, for it is very nasty country for tigers, that same jungle about Sasseram—open scrub, principally, if I remember right, beyr bushes with deep ravines—but he knew the ground well, and on one occasion asked me to sit out one night in a queer sort of underground cellar, built in a nullah by a wealthy zemindar of the neighbourhood, who liked to kill his tigers with perfect safety to himself. Having been belated one night we tried the cellar in spite of snakes, but one trial was quite enough for me. The place was built in the bend of a nullah; it was a room about twelve feet

[1] *Ficus indica.*

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square, loopholed on two sides, or rather one side and a corner; about seven feet, or so, high, with a wooden trapdoor closing the entrance. The top of the cellar was flush with the ground, with steps leading down through the trapdoor, and the floor was level with the bed of the nullah.

'A more miserable night I never spent, for, what with the heat and the mosquitoes, sleep was out of the question. The place was damp and ill ventilated, and not a ghost of a tiger came down the nullah to be shot. Koonwur Sing, who built it, may possibly enjoy that sort of thing, but I much prefer a hole in the open air.

'Well, when I came to the Central Provinces, Moula's imagination was so fired by my accounts of the shikar to be had here, that he agreed to follow my fortunes; and, leaving a sum of money with his disconsolate family, he started with my carts for the long journey. He is a dreadful miser, and lives on air, I think, sending all his savings down periodically to Sasseram, where I firmly believe he has intentions of buying lands and dying a zemindar.[1] He is supposed to belong to the Kyuth, or writer class, generally called Lallas, and therefore he is usually styled Lalla-jee; but he is quite free from the prejudices of his class, and will skin any sort of animal and has no more compunction in tying out a cow as bait for a tiger than he has in eating his dinner. He has one peculiarity; once a year he comes up and gravely asks for three days' leave—one day to get drunk in, and two days to recover, and on these occasions he keeps out of sight. His annual custom over, he is as sober as a judge for the next twelve months. I never

[1] The poor fellow was killed by a tiger at last, instead of going back a zemindar. See note at the end of this book for the story of his death, given by Captain Forsyth, whose account of his early days is incorrect.

could make out why he does it; his head aches dreadfully after these bouts, and he acknowledges his folly, but he goes on doing it nevertheless.'

On their arrival at the camp they were met by old Sheykha, who had some news to relate. The tiger beyond Khundipar, about which Fordham had sent for him, had at last made a *kill*—a Gond runner had just come in to say so. But the '*gara*' was lying out in the open, and far from a convenient tree, which was awkward, for the brute was one of those very suspicious ones that will not return to the kill if it be disturbed.

'Well, what do you propose to do, Sheykha?' asked Fordham.

'My lord, your slave's advice is that you send Nusseer Khan and Luchman with the Gond to make a *machaun* in the nearest tree, and I will manage the rest. You can go out about two o'clock in the afternoon so as to reach the spot by three or four, and with your honour's good fortune the tiger shall eat bullets. But your slave wants a calf to kill.'

'You shall have one; but what for?' asked his master.

'Khodawund, it will never do to approach the gara with that tiger, and yet we must get it nearer to the tree. So my idea is to take the fresh skin of a calf, and I will wrap my feet in it with the fleshy side out. I will then approach the kill and attach a cord to it by which we [illegible] to the machaun. The tiger will not [illegible] my track, and he [illegible] carried off his meal, and will follow [illegible]

[illegible] a good idea,' rejoined Fordham. 'Make all [illegible] arrangements and send off the elephant with [illegible] o is a first-rate hand at building machauns,

and some one to assist him. Nusseer Khan is bringing home a sambur, and will not be here for some time. Tell the men to be very silent, and to chop their poles at some distance from the place and carry them on the elephant; and, mind, no hookah smoking or shouting whilst at work.'

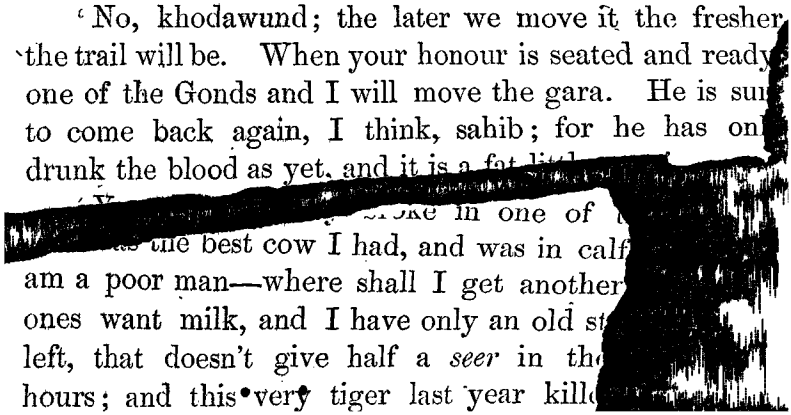
'I'll go with them,' said the old man, 'as soon as I have got the calfskin.'

Sheykha went off in a great bustle to make all his preparations, and our friends to their baths and breakfast. The rest of the day was spent in office-work on Fordham's part, and two hours with a moonshee on Milford's; after which the latter began to skin the sambur's head, and he had only just finished it, and put it into a pickle of salt and alum, when tiffin was announced; and at two o'clock they started for Khundipar.

A brisk ride over pretty, undulating country brought them about half-past three o'clock to the village nearest to the kill; here they were met by the Putail and elders of the village, and by Sheykha and the peons, who reported that the machaun was ready.

'Have you moved the gara yet?' asked Fordham of Sheykha.

'No, khodawund; the later we move it the fresher the trail will be. When your honour is seated and ready one of the Gonds and I will move the gara. He is sure to come back again, I think, sahib; for he has only drunk the blood as yet, and it is a fat little



spoke in one of the best cow I had, and was in calf am a poor man—where shall I get another ones want milk, and I have only an old st left, that doesn't give half a *seer* in the hours; and this very tiger last year kill

plough bullocks, and I have had to pay ever since for the use of another.'

'Well, never mind,' said Fordham good-naturedly; 'if I kill this tiger you shall have another bullock, or a cow, whichever you like.'

'May the Burra Deo make him eat your bullets, Maharaj!' replied the man, grinning with delight.

It was such acts of liberality as this that gained Fordham a name in the district and influence with the people, who, like all natives, love the open hand.

As time was getting on Fordham ordered up the elephant, and, mounting with Milford, told Sheykha to lead the way. The ground beyond the village was a good deal cut up with ravines, all converging towards a deep dark valley, whose sides were clothed with dense forest, matted with mahoul creepers,[1] and down the centre of which flowed a sluggish stream, stained brown with decaying vegetation. It was, as Fordham had remarked before, a place where an elephant would be useless, and beaters could not be used from the size of the valley; so there was no chance of getting a tiger, except by watching for him over a bait.

After crossing a few fields they came to the tree where the machaun had been built. This was constructed of stout poles, lashed across the boughs of the tree at a convenient height, twelve or fifteen feet from the ground. On these cross poles was placed a charpoy, or [illegible] bed, which is merely a framework of [illegible] Over this were common [illegible] wood with a netting of stout cord. Over this spread rugs and blankets, and green branches were woven all round and underneath, so as to hide the occupants. The whole had the appearance of a gigantic nest when viewed from a distance.

[1] *Bauhinia racemosa.*

The elephant marched up with soft and silent tread, and the two Englishmen scrambled into their eyrie, and away went Bussunta to the village again, the mahout receiving orders to come back on hearing three pistol shots fired in succession.

The gara lay out in the open near some low bushes, too far from the tree for a certain shot, and Milford watched with some interest the proceedings of old Sheykha, who began to cut his calfskin in four quarters; two of these he wrapped over his own feet with the hair inwards, and the other two he handed to his Gondee assistant, who followed his example. When the two men were ready, Sheykha took a coil of rope and made a slip-knot and noose at one end, and drawing his long knife out of its sheath, he waddled away in his awkward mocassins, followed by the Gond in a goose-step.

The first thing Sheykha did when he reached the dead cow was to slip his noose over its horns; then with his keen knife he slashed the body open, so that the viscera protruded and left a broader trail; then the two men laid on the rope manfully and dragged the cow slowly towards the tree. It was as much as they could manage, and the poor old shikaree was fairly out of breath by the time the kill was placed in its new position, about five-and-twenty yards from the machaun. Our readers must remember that a small Indian cow, of the common breed, is lighter even than the little Alderney, otherwise the two men would have found it an impossible task.

However, Sheykha, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow, gave a triumphant smile, and pointed to the result of his labours, as much as to say, 'There! What do you think of that piece of generalship?'

Whispering to the Gond to be off to his village, the

old man divested himself of his calfskins, and with the agility of a boy climbed up into the tree, and seated himself at the back of the machaun.

Fordham had already made himself comfortable with a book which he had brought with him, as talking is not allowable on such occasions. Milford had been sufficiently amused at watching the removal of the cow, and now he was all excitement about the approach of the tiger, and he found much to attract his attention in the birds and insects that flew about. The day was fast declining, for much time had been taken up with the preparations, and Sheykha said the tiger might appear at any moment. In quiet places they frequently come out before dark; if not then, they will come about eight or nine, or else four o'clock in the morning; the supposition in the latter case is that the tiger, being shy of coming back to his kill, starts off on another hunting expedition, and, failing to get another victim, he returns early in the morning to the meal of the day before.

In the present case, however, the day wore on, and night came without any sign of the tiger. Fordham had to close his book for want of light, and Milford was wearily yawning and longing to stretch his legs, as machaun work is rather cramping for British limbs. Natives can rest in any posture, but English joints lack the suppleness of the Oriental. Sheykha's head was bowed on his arms, which were crossed over his knees, and he appeared to be asleep, but it was the sleep of the proverbial weasel.

The moon was rising over the distant forests, and gave light enough to distinguish any animal that might approach. Now and then came the short, sharp bark of the grey fox, which was answered by the scream of the plover, as the marauder passed too close to her nest.

The nightjars kept up their incessant cry of 'Chuckoo-chuckoo, chuckoo-chuckoo!' and at times the cry of the pea-fowl came borne on the breeze from the dark woods in the distance. Once Milford thought he heard the deep 'A-o-ungh!' of a tiger far away, but Fordham whispered to him that the deceptive sounds came from the great owl[1] and not from a feline throat.

A little later on, our friends having in the mean time discussed in silence a packet of sandwiches and a flask of brandy and water, they were startled by hearing the loud explosive bell of a sambur from the direction of the valley, and immediately after it was answered by a low muttering growl. Sheykha lifted a warning finger and whispered 'Bāgh!' Milford lost all his lassitude at once, and eagerly expected the tiger at every rustle of a dry leaf toyed with by the evening breeze. His companion remained passive and calm, knowing by experience that there is many a slip between the cup and the lip at this kind of sport, and that the least thing might turn the animal away at the last moment.

It had been arranged that Fordham was to take the first shot at the tiger. He wished to give it to his young friend, but Milford would not hear of it, and begged him to take it, especially as he was unaccustomed to night-shooting, and as this tiger had begun to kill men it was most desirable that he should not escape. The latter argument had some weight with Fordham, who would otherwise have not been outdone in generosity, or would have insisted at all events in tossing for the first shot; but, as important results depended on his aim, he thought that after all it would be better to leave it to him.

It was about ten o'clock when the old shikaree's keen

[1] *Huhua nipalensis.* JERDON.

eyes noticed a gliding form stealing along the field. Suddenly it stopped where the gara had been, and a low growl was distinctly heard. The old man tapped Fordham on the arm and pointed. The animal was evidently at fault, and walked round and round, now and then giving vent to an impatient growl. At last he seemed to perceive the trail, and slowly followed it up, till his eyes fell on the gara in its new situation. Then he stopped, and looked about as if to reconnoitre the ground before proceeding, and he exercised so much caution that Fordham almost grew doubtful whether he would come up or not. Finally he made up his mind, and, boldly coming forward, he buried his fangs in the cow's neck, and gave her a violent shake as if he thought she still had life in her.

There was no time to lose now, for Fordham suspected that his intention was to drag off the body to a more sheltered place. The moon shone brightly and full on the tiger and the dead cow, but the sportsmen were hidden in dense shade from the overhanging branches, and it was impossible in such a light to see the fine sights of a rifle. The natives, on such occasions, use a fluff of cotton wool which they tie to the muzzle of their guns, and when the moonlight falls on the barrel, a bit of wax covered with scales of coarsely powdered mica is sometimes useful, for when an angle of the mineral catches a ray of the moon it glows like a diamond spark. But both these makeshifts are faulty and apt to fail. Fordham had a plan of his own. Drawing from his pocket a small phial, containing a mixture of phosphorus and olive oil, he applied with a finger a small dab on the fore and hind sights of his rifle, which for a minute or so glowed with a clear pale light.

The tiger, savagely shaking his lifeless victim, once

more proceeded to drag it away, and as he lifted up the cow's head in his massive jaws, the moonlight streamed full over his broad flanks, which seemed pale grey in the uncertain light, with the black stripes standing out clear and distinct.

The two luminous patches blended in one in a line between the hollow behind his shoulder and the keen eye of the hunter, and the gloomy valley beyond gave out a muffled echo, as the sharp report was answered by a sullen roar. Quick as thought a second barrel was poured into him, as he lay gasping on the ground by the side of the gara.

'Now, Ernest, give him a dose,' exclaimed Fordham.

The young man fired, but he was not accustomed to the light, and both his bullets went harmlessly into the dead cow, when the tiger, to their astonishment, suddenly jumped up and bolted, roaring lustily.

The two men looked at each other in blank amazement.

'Well, I declare that is a sell!' cried Milford.

'He won't go far,' said old Sheykha; 'he may get to the Semul-walla bhugra,[1] but not beyond; he is too badly hit, sahib, to travel far to-night.'

'Well, we'll see in the morning. Anyhow, I don't think he'll live long with a couple of two-ounce bullets through his lungs. And now we'll call up the elephant; there is no use our staying here any longer. Hand me my revolver, Sheykha.'

Firing three shots in the air, he sat down and waited for her arrival, and in half an hour they were on their way home, which they reached about one o'clock, and were glad to turn into comfortable beds for the remainder

[1] The Cotton-tree Ravine.

of the night, promising to themselves to follow up the track of the wounded tiger on the morrow.

Next morning, at break of day, Bussunta, with her howdah strapped on, with Nusseer Khan, Luchman, and Sheykha, passed silently out of the sleeping camp, and took their way to Khundipar. The battery of rifles and ammunition, and a plentiful supply of rockets and *anars*, were stowed away in the howdah.

Fordham had ordered her an hour's start, for he and Milford intended to ride out. It is a wise thing to avoid as much as possible journeying on an elephant, especially in a howdah, for the motion is anything but pleasant, and the locomotion is but slow. As long as one is on the look-out for game it does not so much signify, but with nothing to relieve the tedium of a long stage, the jolting after a time becomes intolerable. Once we tried, when short of horses, to make out one stage of twenty miles on our elephant. We strapped on the pad a bedstead with the legs turned up, round which we passed ropes so as to make a rail, and then, with a soft mattress underneath, and bolsters on either side, we thought we might sleep in comfort. Vain delusion. No wretch in a fishing coble, in a chopping sea, in the English Channel, ever was so pitched and rolled about as we were on that eventful night. After trying it for some time our patience gave way, and, the monotony becoming unendurable, we ousted the mahout, and, crossing the animal's neck, drove her for the rest of the stage.

At six o'clock the camp was astir. Cossack stood saddled for Fordham, and a grey mare for Milford, and they soon appeared fresh for the fray, having made a good *chota hazaree* of tea, and toast, and eggs. A couple of sowars were in attendance, and the four mounted, and

were soon dashing along at a stretching gallop over the little cart-road leading to Khundipar.

There is nothing more enjoyable in India than a smart gallop on fresh horses, in the cool early morning in the month of February. The air is exhilarating and, at least in Central India, the scenery is ever-varying and beautiful. Now one dashes past a wide-spreading banyan tree, its leafy colonnades echoing with countless songsters; then a butea, covered with its blaze of gorgeous orange-scarlet blossoms, comes in the way; then a stately cotton tree with the honey-suckers fluttering about its crimson chalices. Away in the distance rise blue hills with wreaths of grey mist slowly floating up, from the midst of which comes

The mournful cry of sunward sailing cranes,

as flocks of sarus wend their way to the tanks that stud the plains of Kerola below the ghats. But the two horsemen noted little of these things, as they held steadily on their way. They were anxious to get to the ground before the tiger had moved further away; if he once got into the big valley it was hopeless to think of securing him, but the 'Semul-walla bhugra' was a sure find, a *cul de sac*, from which escape would be almost impossible.

The sun was well up by the time they reached Khundipar, and, riding through the village, they made straight for the tree where they had sat up the night before. Here they found the elephant and the peons; old Sheykha had gone off on the track of the tiger, and he was expected back immediately. Fordham got off and examined the ground. Close to the body of the cow was a dark stain, where the ground had soaked in the blood from the tiger's wounds; large drops marked the direction he had taken, and there was but little doubt that he could

not go far. Milford looked with considerable disgust at the two holes, about eight inches apart, his bullets had made in the cow, but he consoled himself with the idea that it was really too dark to see his sights, and that he had had no time to apply any of Fordham's preparation of phosphorus.

Sheykha now made his appearance, and confidently reported that the tiger was in the Semul-walla bhugra. So the elephant was mounted, and they proceeded there at once.

The Cotton-tree Ravine took its name, as may be supposed, from a large bombax[1] growing at the head of the nullah which was one of the feeders of the dark valley before mentioned. The place was not very deep, but was densely overgrown with brushwood, which grew amongst the rocks of which the bottom was composed. The sides, instead of being abrupt, sloped gently, and the whole was easily traversed by the elephant.

'I am pretty certain he is there,' remarked Fordham, as he watched the antics of some large grey monkeys called lungoors,[2] which leaped from branch to branch of an old kouha tree, jabbering and grinning most insanely. 'There is very little doubt about it,' he continued; 'those lungoors are just above where he lies. Akbar Ali, take the elephant down into the bed of the nullah to the left, and work up.'

Those who have only seen an elephant in a menagerie, or paid sixpence for a ride on one in the Zoological Gardens, have but a faint notion, if any at all, of the wonderful power and sagacity displayed by this animal in the forests, and especially in the hilly and rocky forests, of Central India. Trained to obey every word of com-

[1] *Bombax heptaphyllum.* [2] *Presbytis Entellus.*

mand, and to judge with extreme nicety every intonation of the driver's voice, the feats performed are almost incredible, and seem still more marvellous when, as is often the case, the elephant is one which has been but a year or two in captivity. Watch Bussunta now, as she goes down the steep bank; were she to do so as a horse or other animal would, the occupants of the howdah would find themselves at a most uncomfortable angle. Her fore legs are straight, but she drags her hind ones along the ground; now she recovers herself, as she gains more level footing, but the branches are thick and hinder her passage.

'Lay hold, my sweet one, my life! lay hold, my brave one! Shābash! shābash!' cried Akbar Ali, as she laid hold of branch after branch and tore it from its tree. 'Shābash, my daughter, shābash! now another one; no, no, not that, take the higher branch; there, my queen, my pearl, shābash!' and, as he showered endearing epithets on her, Bussunta proudly stalked through the thicket into the more open bed of the ravine, with a purring noise of self-satisfaction; then she suddenly struck her trunk on the ground with a hollow drum-like sound, and coiled it tightly up.

'The tiger is near, Ernest; look out!' said Fordham, 'that was a warning note of old Bussunta's.'

Cautiously peering about, they went slowly up the ravine.

'Ha! there he is!' exclaimed Milford, pitching forward his rifle and firing. A short, sullen roar followed.

'You touched him up there, Ernest,' said his companion. 'Chello! mahout! chello! after him quick! He seems inclined to sneak off and break out into the open.'

Akbar Ali urged on his elephant in the direction

taken by the tiger, but the bank was steep, and progress impeded by heavy masses of mahoul creeper. Bussunta had just torn away one of these obstructions when, with a savage growl, a yellow mass sprang up and clung to the elephant's head. The situation was critical, but it lasted only a moment. Neither of the sportsmen liked to fire for fear of injuring Bussunta; but she, with a shrill trumpet and a violent effort, shook off her assailant, who was weak and faint with loss of blood, and backed downhill into the bed of the nullah. As the tiger fell off, Fordham planted two more balls in his chest, and he now lay in the last throes of death, with a low, bubbling growl issuing from his clenched jaws.

Akbar Ali was in a great state of mind about his charge, who was restless and excited after her encounter, but on carefully examining her head he was able to report that the injuries were but slight. She was rather badly scratched about the ears and cheeks, where the tiger had embraced her head with his fore paws, and there were two teeth marks on the bump in the middle of her forehead, but he could not bring his under-jaw into play, so the bite was not effectual; on the whole she was more excited than hurt.

'I am afraid I must sacrifice the skin of that tiger,' said Fordham, 'and let Bussunta work her wicked will on him, so that she may regain confidence.'

Old Sheykha and half a dozen Gonds now made their appearance, but Fordham would not let them go near the tiger yet.

'One never knows when these creatures are dead,' he remarked, 'and many a life is lost by incautiously approaching a tiger which has been shot. Here, Ernest, you have an odd barrel loaded; fire it at his head'

The young man raised his rifle and fired. The heavy

two-ounce conical bullet impinged on the tiger's jaw, and, glancing off at an angle, went singing over the hill. But there was no sign of life.

'He is dead, sahib,' said Sheykha, going up with the Gonds.

'Drag him down here, Sheykha,' called out Fordham, 'drag him down here, and give him to the elephant. Now, Ernest, we'll get off, for it won't be pleasant when she gets hold of that brute.'

The tiger was dragged down, and when the elephant saw it she gave another trumpet, and backed.

'Go on, my brave one, go on!' cried Akbar Ali, urging her forward.

It was curious to mark the influence of the man over the natural timidity of the animal. 'Go on, my daughter; shābash, what is it but a cat? Shābash! well done! hit him again.' She went up wriggling and shuffling, but still she went up and hit the tiger a tremendous blow with her trunk, enough to smash all his ribs, and then backed a few yards. 'Shābash! shābash! my queen, have at him again; who is he that he should stand against my brave one? Shābash! there, toss him well.'

This time, after giving the tiger a second blow, she turned sideways and administered a kick which sent him flying; then she rushed at him and tried to trample on him, and finally got the body between her legs, when she kept up a sort of ball play, kicking it forward with a hind leg, and pitching it back with a fore-foot till the tiger was almost pounded to a jelly.

'There, there, that will do, my beauty, that will do; you have well beaten him; who is he that he should spit on our beards? Shābash hi! well done, well done! now leave him. Enough, enough. There, go up to your master; salaam, daughter of elephants, salaam!'

The proud creature raised her trunk to her forehead and waved it in the air with a slight trumpet.

'Bravo, Bussunta,' said Fordham, caressing her trunk; 'you shall have lots of sweetmeats, and a bottle of liquor to-night.'

The sagacious creature acknowledged the caress by a peculiar purring noise, and, as her master mentioned the sweetmeats, the mahout gave her a quiet hint, and she salaamed again.

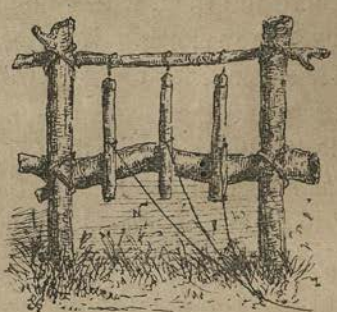
The tiger was not such a finely marked animal as the one shot by Milford, but still he was a good-sized beast, and his skin had to be taken off for the Government reward. His skull was also wanted by Fordham for his collection, the bullet having glanced off the jaw-bone giving it an additional interest. So he told Sheykha to have it skinned there and then, whilst he and Milford rode home. Great were the rejoicings among the villagers at the death of their enemy, for one or two men had fallen victims to this tiger, and they were beginning to be afraid of him. The Putail begged for some of the fat, which is looked upon as a specific for rheumatism, and the old Gond who had lost his cow asked for a portion of the liver to eat, it being a popular superstition that tiger's liver gives a stout heart. Accordingly Sheykha was told to comply with these requests, and the old Gond went up to the dead tiger, and thus apostrophized him—

'Ah, budzat! you ate my cattle, now I will eat you!' a tit-for-tat which seemed to afford him infinite satisfaction.

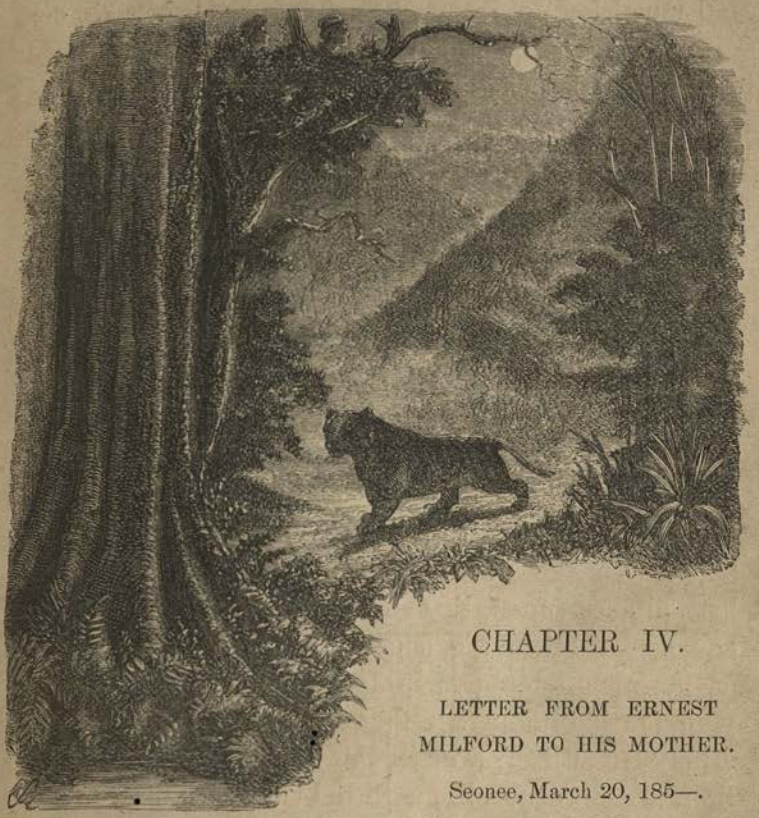
The vultures were swooping round the carcase of the poor little cow, as our friends galloped past on their way home. They might now have undisturbed possession of it, for the heat and exposure were beginning to tell upon it, and rendered it unfit even for a Gond's consumption.

Had Fordham not sat over it, and orders been given for it to be left untouched, it would have been cut up and carried off the first day, for the Gonds are omnivorous, and, thinking that it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, make the most of a comrade's misfortune, and eat up what the tiger may choose to leave of his cow.

It was mid-day when the horsemen galloped into camp, and the two Englishmen were not sorry to get out of the glare and heat of the sun, and exchange for it cool, shady tents, refreshing baths, and a substantial breakfast.



DEER RATTLE.



CHAPTER IV.

LETTER FROM ERNEST MILFORD TO HIS MOTHER.

Seonee, March 20, 185—.

My dearest Mother—

We have returned to the station for a fortnight, so I am going to pack up my boxes of shikar trophies, and send them off to you. There will be quite an Indian museum at the Lodge by the time I return to England. I have already given you accounts of the sambur horns and my first tiger, but I have still many others whose histories are as yet unwritten, and I am afraid I shall cover many sheets of paper ere you have had a full account of the doings of the last month. However, I know I am writing to a partial reader, and *you* will not find my adventures tedious, whatever they might be to other people.

I am glad to hear Uncle Tom is interested in my doings. I think he used to consider me rather a milksop because I preferred a day's rabbit-shooting or fishing to hard riding after a fox. What you tell me about his having made me his heir, as regards the Ferndale estate, is news, and good news too if he keeps to it, and I don't forfeit his good opinion somehow. I suppose I must send him a skin or two, but my first ones must go to you. How are the Lloyds? Have you seen Edith lately? Tell her I haven't had a lavender kid on my fist for many months, and my complexion is copper-coloured enough for a Pawnee Indian.

I hope Uncle Tom is of a constant mind. I like India well enough for the present, but I should like to rest my old bones (when it comes to that time) in a house of my own in old England. I always thought he had pitched upon that harum-scarum, hard-riding, and equally hard-drinking cousin, Roderick, for his successor at Ferndale. Of course I keep a journal. Wasn't it your parting injunction that I should faithfully chronicle all my small beer, even of the mildest tap? and did I not fill that morocco album with inane recordings of sharks and albatrosses, lobscouse and salt junk, stormy petrels and flying fish in that dreary voyage round the Cape? And have I not been giving you monthly extracts from it in letters of a magnitude which gives the Bengalee Baboo here, who officiates as postmaster, a very erroneous idea of my importance, for he is firmly possessed of the notion that I am the 'Times' correspondent for Central India?

I told you in my last of our success with the tiger at Khundipar. Well, we struck camp next day and marched down into Kerola, a division of this district lying in the valley of the Bān Gunga, below the plateau

on which this station is built. Part of our route lay along the Hirrie river, a lovely little stream which joins the Gunga at Sirekha. At Amoda Gurh, where there is one of the old rock-fortresses of the ancient Gonds, we tried for bison, which inhabit the bamboo jungle, and failed, but we got some spotted deer—two very fine stags, and one day we murdered a tiger; I say murdered, for we found him asleep and shot him—a rather uncommon occurrence, for tigers, like weasels, are seldom found napping. We were skirting the banks of a deep nullah, one of the feeders of the Hirrie, when my eye was attracted by a beautiful wild jessamine bush covered with blossom, which hung in snowy wreaths over the steep bank; there was a little cool shady arbour underneath the drooping branches, and there, to my astonishment, I saw a fine tiger lying fast asleep, his head resting against the bank, and his fore paws, as he lay on his side, were stretched out and crossed—an attitude frequently taken by a greyhound as he lies on his side. I never saw anything more striking than this fine animal, usually so wild and fierce, now in calm repose. But there was no time to sentimentalize over him; it took but a second to direct Fordham's attention, and to stop the elephant, whose silent tread had not disturbed his majesty's slumbers. Another moment and four bullets were buried in his broad chest; he sprang to his feet, and, with a single bound, cleared the opposite bank, and, charging about a hundred yards, he pitched heavily on his head, and by the time we got up he was dead.

It was on this trip I came across two queer specimens of humanity—a quail catcher and a snarer of kingfishers.

The former I met on a wild upland, whither I had gone in search of a blue bull. He was a little shrivelled-up man, in scanty attire, with a bullock as desiccated in

appearance as himself, a large flat basket to hold his birds, and a trap. I entered into conversation with him, and asked him if he could show me how he caught the birds, promising to buy all he could catch there and then. It was late in the year for quail, which are generally found in greater abundance in the early part of the cold season; but there were a few fields of millet in the neighbourhood, and there was a chance of getting a few birds. After hunting about for a time my friend flushed a covey, and marked where they alighted; then, making a *detour*, he proceeded to set his traps, which consisted of a series of frames about two feet long by one foot broad, joined at the ends, which folded up like a long map. There were about a dozen of these frames, and the centre one had a hole in it large enough to admit a partridge.

With a few bamboo pegs the trapper soon arranged his apparatus in the form of a semicircular wall, and behind the hole in the centre frame he fastened a large net-bag, propped up with a few sticks; this done, he ran back to the place from which we had started the birds, and began to work his bullock backwards and forwards, gradually with each tack nearing the hiding-place of the covey. Soon the little brown heads were to be seen popping up from the grass, and then, seeing that there was no immediate descent threatened, they edged off slowly, as the bullock came nearer and nearer. By a little judicious dodging, the trapper managed to get the birds within the sweep of his nets, and then he waited. The stupid little things toddled on and on till they were stopped by the net, when they took off to the left, which was quite a wrong direction; so my friend by a flank movement headed them again, and turned them back towards the centre of the net. Now and then a silly bird would try and poke his head through the meshes,

but none thought of hopping over. At last the leader came to the hole in the centre. Ah! here was a grand opportunity! In he popped, and in popped all the others, and my dusky teacher in the art of snaring rushed forward with a triumphant whoop, and tied up the mouth of the bag with all the struggling quail inside.

I gave him a rupee for the birds and his trouble, and he was very well pleased with his morning's work.

The kingfisher catcher I met on the banks of an affluent of the Gunga. I first noticed some pieces of mat put out in the sun to dry, with a number of bright blue birdskins, which, on nearer approach, I saw were of a species of kingfisher. Other mats were covered with bits of flesh drying in the sun. The trapper was a Madrassee, who told me he took his skins down to Madras, where he got a good price for them from merchants who exported them to Burmah and China. His mode of working was with a decoy bird, which he had in a little cage. According to his account kingfishers are excessively pugnacious, and resent fiercely any intrusion on their accustomed beats. The trapper, taking advantage of this, puts his decoy in a conspicuous place, and surrounds him with well-limed twigs. The kingfisher of the place, on coming across the stranger, indignantly rushes at him, and falls a victim to his rashness. The bird, when killed, is carefully freed from the birdlime by an application of hot oil, and then skinned and dried. I estimated about 150 skins of two kinds of kingfishers in his possession. I bought one skin from him of the great kingfisher.[1] A huge bird compared with our little English one, or some of the brilliant-coloured Indian dwarf species,[2] being sixteen inches in length. It cannot compare with the latter

[1] *Halcyon leucocephalus.*

[2] *Halcyon fuscus* and *Ceyx tridactyla.*

for brightness of colour, being in fact rather a dingy bird to look at by the side of the others, but notable on account of its great size. The bill, which is between three and four inches long, is of a deep crimson, the head brown, the back and wings blue and olive-green, and the under-parts buff, as are also the breast and throat.

In a corner of the box I am sending you will find a small tin, labelled 'marabou plumes,' which you may give to Edith, if she cares to have them. I owe them to Moula, or the Lalla, as he is commonly called, Fordham's shikaree. I was walking along one day, when I saw what I thought was a common adjutant—at a little distance there was not much difference. Moula seized me by the arm, and, in an excited manner, pointed to the bird, and urged me to shoot it. 'Why shoot an adjutant?' I exclaimed, thinking the man was out of his senses. 'Nay, sahib,' he answered, 'that is no common bird, that is a *chooniaree*, not an adjutant. Its feathers are worth their weight in gold; it is very rare, and when I used to get one near Sasseram I made enough money to keep me for months.'

Seeing him so eager about it, I stalked the bird, which seemed very wary, and shot it; and found it to be very like the common adjutant, only with more glossy plumage of a greenish hue. But the twelve feathers of the under-tail coverts are the valuable part of the bird, and which the Lalla set such store by. Similar plumes are obtainable from the common adjutant, but Moula assured me they were far inferior, and did not command such a price as the genuine ones, except when the purchasers were ignorant, and were taken in. Unlike its repulsive town cousin, the marabou adjutant[1] avoids

[1] *Leptoptilos javanica.*

human habitations, and keeps to the lonely pools and streams of the forests, where it lives on frogs and fish.

The Lalla and I have struck up a great friendship, and I find his knowledge of birds most useful. Fordham taught him to skin birds, but he cannot mount them like his master, who is as good as a professional at setting up.

Moula is a queer-looking little man, with a comical face, especially when he breaks out into a broad grin at some of his own jokes; very untidy, his hair and his turban are always awry, and he is never happy unless he is ferreting out the whereabouts of a tiger, or skinning some animal, or polishing his master's guns. I can hardly believe that he belongs to the Kyuth, or writer class, a set of men who consider themselves first class Hindoos outside the Brahminical circle, and as a rule they are ultra-fastidious about their religious observances. But Moula would skin a cat or a monkey, or tie out the sacred cow for a tiger, without the least compunction. I told him one day he would never go to his particular heaven if he went on tying out cows. '*I* don't tie out the cow, sahib,' replied he with a pawky leer; 'it is not *my* cow; I obey orders, and if the tiger kills her, why, the sin lies on my master's shoulders, not mine. I am told to tie a knot in a rope, and if there is a cow at the other end it is not my fault.' He always has a fund of comical stories with which to enliven a dreary march, and one of these struck me as being particularly good. He had just finished a marvellous legend at which we all laughed, and on which I remarked that he had the faculty of pulling the long bow to a considerable extent. 'Why, sahib,' he answered with a grin, 'we are all more or less liars in my country, and if one tells a story, another immediately caps it. There were two young men of my country who had a boasting match, and one

said, "My father is so rich and has so many horses, that his stable is of such extent as to take a horse eleven months to go from one end stall to the other."

'"Shābash, brother," replied the second boaster, "that is very good. My father has a bamboo so long that he can sweep the clouds away with it when they obscure the sun in harvest time."

'"Hi, hi," exclaimed the first, "that is very wonderful; but pray, brother, where does your father keep such a long bamboo?"

'"Why, you stupid!" was the answer, "in your father's stable to be sure."'

The story is not unlike Æsop's fable of the two travellers, but has far more humour in it.

Whilst we were in the valley of the Gunga, we visited the old Gondian hill fort of Kohurgurh. These fastnesses are mostly naturally defensible positions, with slight additions of masonry here and there. With the rude weapons of olden time most of these forts were impregnable, but with modern artillery they could be easily shelled out. Kohurgurh hardly deserves the name of a fort; it is more properly a hill, protected by outworks on its accessible points, nature having done the rest.

We started early one morning, and, after riding to the foot of the hill, we dismounted and proceeded up a sort of gorge or defile, which would admit but one man at a time, or at most but two abreast. On the left top of the bank were the remains of a small bastion, loopholed so as to command the roadway. Very little of the wall remained, and the interior was overgrown with brushwood and dwarf bamboo. A little farther on we followed the course of a sandy nullah for some distance, when, after ascending a little higher, we came to the

second barrier—a massive wall and gateway built across the road.

About two-thirds of the way from the summit of the hill is a fine large baoli, or stone-lined well, with a flight of steps leading down to the water.

Moula, who had been pumping the Gonds about the legends of the place, and had got some wonderful story about one mythological raja of olden time, called Bobal Sah, now exclaimed with great glee,

'Raja Bobal Sah kee jai! see what a fine well he has made among the rocks!'

Onwards we toiled, over rocks and boulders, in and out of bamboo clumps, and along nullah beds. At last we came to a sort of cleared space, an amphitheatre, with some fine jamoon [1] trees.

'There, sahib,' exclaimed Moula, who had been incessantly chattering the whole way; 'there, those jamoon trees bear fruit that weigh three rupees each. Wah, wah! Raja Bobal Sah kee jai! such trees as he planted in the rocky hills!'

After going a little further the pathway (it scarcely deserved the name) took a dip downwards, and after leading us across a grassy ravine, filled with spear-grass, we again mounted through a dense bamboo thicket.

Fordham, from whose eye nothing ever escapes, here suddenly pitched forward his rifle and fired, and on running up we found, in the long grass, shot through the heart, a curious little four-horned antelope.[2] In colour it was a brownish-bay, lighter beneath fore legs, muzzle and edge of ear dark, and inside the legs and ears white. The longer pair of horns were about five inches long, and the little ones in front about one and a half inch.

[1] *Eugenia jambolana.*

[2] *Tetraceros quadricornis.*

The animal is a little smaller than the rib-faced deer, which it rather resembles as it darts through the bamboo thicket. We tried the venison afterwards, but it cannot compare with that of the rib-face, being dry, which Chand Khan tried to remedy by roasting it with mutton fat. However, to return to our journey up the hill, the pathway now became more difficult—fallen trees, huge boulders, slippery ascents of black sandy earth, which the Lalla declared to be the refuse gunpowder of the great battles of old, indignantly refusing to entertain the idea that gunpowder was not known to the great Raja Bobal Sah.

Rocks were climbed over, clumps of bamboo squeezed through, till at last we found ourselves before a narrow cleft in an opposing rock, forming a passage about three feet wide. Across the top of the fissure rested three huge boulders, the third making the passage, which sloped upwards, so narrow that we had to creep through on our hands and knees.

After toiling on a short distance from this natural postern, we turned round a small rock, and came upon a broad platform, called the Kutcherry, commanding a fine view of the country. This, however, was not the highest point, so we turned again and struck off to our right, through a tangled thicket of creepers, when, finally diving down a gully and wriggling through a small hole under a rock, we scrambled up a sloping boulder, and found ourselves at last on the top of Kohurgurh.

Below us stretched the dark jungle in range after range; beyond it were spread the fertile fields of the valley of the Bān Gunga, the pergunnahs of Kerola, and Kuttunghee, and the far distance was bounded by the blue hills of Mandla. The woods were ringing with the merry notes of countless birds; the Indian buff magpie

chattered away on a withered branch close by; down in the dark valleys darted the golden oriole; far in the blue heavens soared the circling vultures, ever on the look-out for prey, whilst hundreds of little bush warblers twittered in the shrubs around us.

I made a sketch of the view before leaving, and whilst I was thus engaged Fordham went off on an exploring trip. Soon after Nusseer Khan came running up to tell me his sahib wanted me at once. I shut up my sketch book and ran down the rocks to where he was. 'Look here, Ernest,' he said, 'what do you think of that creature?' Anything more hideous I never saw, and replied to that effect. Across a small ravine, basking on some rocks, lay an enormous lizard, or iguana, about four feet in length, a most repulsive-looking creature. As I did not care about adding such a reptile to my collection, and Fordham had specimens already, we contented ourselves with miners' courtesy, and heaved half a brick, *alias* a piece of rock, at him, on which he wobbled—for I cannot express his ungainly action in a more apposite phrase—into a crack and disappeared.

We then started for home, and were glad to get to our tents again, for it was excessively hot.

A few days afterwards we found ourselves at Sirekha, at the confluence of the Hirrie and the Gunga.

Across the river we got some fine spotted deer. I must say spotted deer shooting is most enjoyable. They are generally found near rivers, and frequently in bamboo jungle intersected by ravines, where the chances are in favour of your finding a tiger instead of a deer; this of course adds to the excitement, and keeps you constantly on the look-out for squalls. One morning we were out, we saw a herd of about a dozen, with one very fine stag—a magnificent fellow. We made a con-

siderable *détour*, and crept up a grassy ravine till within shot, when we lay down under the crest of the rise to regain breath. At a little distance from us on our left I noticed what I took to be a stone, but the movement of something black on it attracted my attention again—perhaps a butterfly or a small bird on it—however, on looking at it attentively, I found myself staring a fine panther in the face. The movement that struck me was that of one of his ears, and but for this he might have passed unnoticed, so nearly did his spotted head assimilate with the dry grass and leaves. He too was evidently after the deer, when seeing he was discovered he quietly sneaked off before we could get a fair shot at him, and as he passed the herd they got wind of him and came tearing past us at full speed. Fordham took the big stag, and dropped him dead, and a noble fellow he was. I took a younger stag and planted two bullets in him, yet he got away; but in the afternoon we sent Nusseer Khan and the Lalla, with Bhoora, the camel man's dog, and the sagacious fellow tracked the deer for three miles, and at last found him in a nullah stone-dead. The next day we had a fruitless hunt after a tiger, but found some curious remains, and heard a quaint legend in connection with them. To show you that I do keep a journal I will quote from it now.[1]

'The elephant was toiling slowly up one of the many rocky and bamboo-choked ravines which run down to the river, when, on reaching the top of the bank, we came suddenly upon some most curious remains of the rudest form of stone architecture; there were large slabs placed in groups of four or five, with a massive flat one placed table-wise above, forming the cromlech of our

[1] See Note at the end of the volume.

Druids. Some of these groups wanted the horizontal slab; other stones were arranged in circles, forty or fifty feet in diameter; and the whole occupied a considerable space of ground. We felt greatly puzzled how to account for these remains. The place was an unlikely one for the burial-ground of a village or city, had anything tended to prove the existence of such, for it was rocky and full of ravines; unless it had been chosen for the facility for quarrying the blocks. Perhaps a battle had been fought and the slain piously interred by the survivors, and sacrifices offered within the circles; that it was a mere accidental chaotic jumble of rocks, produced by natural causes, was an idea which could not be entertained for a moment. Hoping to find some clue, we got a few men to dig up some of the cromlechs, and whilst they were at work we squatted under a tree, on a huge trap boulder, and sending for an old Baiga priest who was reported to have some knowledge of the origin of the place, we asked for his opinion on the subject. After a little shyness, smoothed away by a few quids of tobacco, he began his narrative thus:

"In times long ago, sahib, long before we Gonds came into existence, and the country was peopled by deotas (i.e. gods), the Hirrie river was born, and was to be married to the Gunga. Ah! in those days the [illegible] was a finer river than it is now; Bhim Sen spoilt [illegible] did. There were Donger Deo and Soonder Deo, Kookra Deo, and ever so many deotas, but Bhim Sen [illegible] the most powerful of all, as Kookra Deo was the [illegible]rabbed and ill-favoured. In those days Bhim Sen [illegible]l to dam up the Gunga to make a fish-pond, so [illegible]gan at night, for the deos only work at night, [illegible]j, and he began to tear up the hills by the roots [illegible] throw them down into the valley. That big

spur near the bend of the river is one, and the big hog-backed hill, where the Goorera Deo still lives, is another. A little gap only remained, the space between the hills where the river still runs, and Bhim Sen toiled hard, for if he could not do it before morning he would never be able to do it at all. So he tore up two hills by the roots and, tying them to the ends of his staff, slung them across his shoulder and carried them down to the river; but just before he got there the cock crew! Bhim Sen flung down his load in a rage, and there are the hills to this day, sahib; there, those conical ones out in the plains. It is true, maharaj," continued he, gravely, seeing a smile on our faces; "what should hills do out there by themselves if Bhim Deo had not thrown them down there? And he hurled away his staff across the river; they say it is still to be seen some thirty *miles* from here; it is of stone, and is forty paces long. Well, sahib, as Bhim Sen could not stop the Gunga, the Gunga went on, and at last wanted a wife, and the deotas agreed it was only just and fair he should have a wife as other rivers mostly have. So the young Hirrie was born, and there was to be a grand wedding. All the deotas and woodland fays were to attend—all except Kookra Deo, for he was, as I have said, crabbed and ill-favou[illegible] and made everybody miserable; so they all agre[illegible]y would not invite Kookra Deo. Alas! they forgot [illegible] was one of the most powerful as well as the malicious of the deotas. It was a sad mistake. Kookra Deo laughed a savage laugh when he heard and vowed to be revenged.

"'So all the deotas and woodland fays at[illegible] the marriage of the pretty Hirrie with the wi[illegible] capricious Gunga; all the deos, and from yonder hill, yon far away came Rajah Bobal Sah on his

horses—yes, sahib, horses had wings in those days; Rajah Indra cut them off, but they carry the marks to this day. Look at your horse's legs, sahib, and you will see the marks.

'"Well, maharaj, the party assembled at the *suggum* (confluence) of the two streams, and the feast began. The elder and more sober deotas sat in groups of four or five, talking and watching the younger ones, who were dancing round hand in hand in rings. All were bright and gay, and all said, 'Well it is that crabbed old Kookra Deo is not here to spoil our pleasure.' But old Kookra Deo laughed to himself from behind the rock from whence he watched the dancers; he laughed with savage glee as he hugged something under his arm. The mirth grew fast and furious, and the revel was at its height, when Kookra Deo, chuckling to himself and filling his ears with clay, pulled out the bundle from under his arm—*it was a cock fast asleep*. Placing it on the rock before him he gave it a shake, and, snatching a handful of feathers from its tail, he plunged with a triumphant yell into the Gunga.

'"The startled bird awoke with a scream, looked round half sleepily for a second, and then clapped his wings and crew, loud and clear.

'"That instant sudden silence fell on the place; the dancers, the groups of watchers, all turned into stone! rude blocks occupied the place of nymph and fay, and hushed was the sound of revelry. Weeping, the silver Hirrie fell into the arms of the Gunga, who bore her sobbing away. There are no more deotas or woodland fays left in the silent valley since the night when the wicked Kookra Deo turned them all into stone!"

'The general style of the story, combined with the strangely coincident superstition of cock-crow, reminded

us strongly of the Trolls and Necks of Northern mythology, and the rude cromlechs and cycloliths around us strengthened in no small degree the resemblance. The hero of the hills, Bhim Sen, is by no means a Gond creation, as he is well known in many parts of India, and a goodly supply of ponderous staves he must have had, to judge by the number of *lāts* or monoliths, some of vast size, which up and down the country bear his name.

'Our excavations came to nothing; in fact we did not go deep enough. Fordham said they were Indo-Scythic, and that he had seen them in other parts of Central India; and, promising ourselves another visit and more patient exploration than we had then time for, we left Sirekha next morning. It was at Sirekha I saw for the first time one of the most beautiful of the pigeon kind, the bronzed-winged ground-dove.[1] They should call it the emerald-winged dove, for its back and wings are of that hue, with a faint golden sheen; the under part and breast are reddish brown. It is a most lovely little bird, and, as it strutted about on the opposite bank of a ravine we were descending, I quite forgot all about the tiger we were after.'

Now, my dear mother, I am going to give you one more extract from my journal; I am afraid the rhythmic part of it will show you that the son's poetical powers are not equal to his father's, but you must remember the lines are but jungle jottings, written down on the spur of the moment to kill time, when, as the Yankees say, I was up a tall tree.

'UMMA MAIEE.

'It was in this month of March that I was in the south-east corner of this district. We had not had much

[1] *Chalcophaps indicus.*

in the way of sport. On the plains, near the Gondee village of Moorh-air, I ran down and shot a couple of blue bulls; bison, the chief object of our trip, we had not seen a hoof of, and we were on our way back to the station when the Lalla, who was always poking his nose about into every corner for *khubbur*, came to me and informed me, in a confidential sort of way, that he had heard from some Gonds of a spring far in the depths of the jungle; a spring of cold water flowing all the year round.

'"Now, sahib," said he, "the Gonds consider this place as sacred; they say the ghosts of their forefathers inhabit a big tree there, and they never go there at night. Now, such a place must needs have thousands of animals coming to drink; therefore, if it is an order, I will go and build a machaun; we are sure to get sambur and perhaps a tiger."

'Of course I jumped at the idea, and off he went. It was noon ere he returned, full of the wonders of the place; so, dining early, I started about 4 P.M.

'Our course lay over a series of the same monotonous bamboo-clad hills that prevail in that part of the district. Now and then, as we skirted a spur of the range, an opening vista showed us the broad plains of Kerola, studded with a thousand tanks, glittering in the golden flood of light poured by the setting sun, like a shield of bright enamel set with precious gems. Beyond the Bān Gunga rose the blue hills of Mhow, with behind them the verdant valleys of the Bunjur and the Halone—the haunts of the red deer. Down below us the gorges were darkening into the shades of night, and warned us to make haste lest we should lose our way in the forests. We had persuaded a young Gond to be our guide, though he undertook the task rather reluctantly.

'"You will never shoot anything there," said he;

"Doongerdeo permits not his beasts to be slain; besides," continued he, gravely, "it is not good to appear before him empty-handed; it is not wise."

'"Who is Doongerdeo?" I asked.

'"Who is Doongerdeo? Why, he is a great deo, the lord of the forests. The sahib should have brought five pān leaves and a betel nut, and then perhaps he might slay one of the deer."

'The sun was just going down over the darkened forest, when the guide suddenly led the way with rapid steps into a lonely glen. Down we went through the dark shadows of the forest trees, the gloom increasing as we descended, and the moonbeams began to flicker over our path through the overhanging branches. The grey monkey, startled at our intrusion, made the woods resound with his ghostly "Whoop! whoop! whoop!" the nightjars flew around us in their eccentric manner, and the large horned owl sailed through the gloomy arches like some disembodied spirit seeking rest. In sooth it was an uncanny-looking spot; no wonder the superstitious aborigines avoided it at night.

'Turning round a clump of bamboo, we hurried down into the gravelly bed of a mountain torrent, now quite dry, and a few steps farther led us into a little dell. Ah! how lovely it seemed; like an oasis in a desert amid the high rugged hills that surrounded it. The grass was as soft as velvet, and the air was laden with the perfume of the harsinga[1] and the tinsa.[2] Shut in by waving bamboo and twining creeper, it was as a gem in a casket.

'At the upper end was a sort of natural bower formed in the side of the bank, and from the luxuriant vegetation that surrounded it shot up into the cold, clear

[1] *Nyctanthes arbor tristis.* [2] *Dalbergia oojeinensis.*

sky an immense semul tree, whose giant arms spread themselves out aloft as if to shade its sacred spot from the rude beams of the sun. Under its roots was a large stone dabbled over with red paint, and covered with withered flowers, cocoa-nut shells, and other remnants of offerings; whilst on one side, in a lovely little gravelly basin, decked with fern, lily and floweret, bubbled up Umma Maiee, the mother of springs!

'The foot-prints of numbers of animals were traceable in the soft sandy bed over which the calm little streamlet flowed. The tiger and leopard had been there; the lordly sambur and the little quadricornis; the porcupine and the hare; and as the guide pointed with an exclamation of "Boda!" we perceived that a herd of bison had but just slaked their thirst.

'Taking my rifles, knife, and blanket, I ascended a small dhaoura tree close by, in which the Lalla had built the machan. He followed me up, and the Gond went away to the hut of a Baiga friend about a mile off, promising to return early in the morning, choosing rather a trip alone through the forest to a night by the tree of Doongerdeo; and in half an hour Moula and myself were the only human beings near the Umma Maiee.

'The moon rose high over the amphitheatre of hills, and danced in flickering beams over the surface of the little spring. The wild notes of the night birds were ringing through the forest, and mingled with them came the moan of the wood-owl and the distant whoop of the Entellus monkey. The soft rippling of the waters reminded me of the well-loved springs of home—of Pot-boil and the Saints' Well, and many others in dear old Derbyshire. It sang to me as the voice of an old friend, and I translated it as follows.

'Song of Umma Maiee.

'I come from the crystal halls of Earth;
From the mother of springs I flow,
Past golden mines, where no daylight shines,
To a torrid clime and a land of dearth;
Mid the forest dark—like a diamond spark
I flash as I onward go!

'I might have chosen my course to steer
To a land where plenty smiles,
Where in fairy bowers, mid summer flowers,
I might babble and play from year to year;
Or have pattered away, near the ocean spray,
On some lovely coral isle!

'But I chose not to share with others the love
Which I gain from each creature here;
Where the floweret wee and the forest tree
Keep off the rude beams from the sun above,
And the tiger so grim, and the leopardess slim,
Drink with the tim'rous deer!

'Lovingly o'er me the green fern bends,
And mosses creep close to my side;
From the trees above the lone turtle dove
Her mournful note with the *hurrial* blends;
And in evening's shades from the forest-glades
The peacock hastes to the tide!

'The beasts of the forest all come to my call,
I gather the birds of the air;
And man bends the knee when he comes to me—
He drinks and he calls me 'the mother of all.'
And in awe bends he at the giant tree,
For spirits of eld live there!

'And in his traditions of early lore
He hears of the Umma Maiee,
And the spirits that dwell near that lonely well

Are those of great warriors and men of yore,
Where his father has gone, and he, the son,
Will go when he happens to die!

'My name is known through this forest land,
And whenever a Gond comes nigh,
Some offering small, 'neath the semul tall,
He lays on a stone with a trembling hand;
Then coming to me he drinks, and he
Blesses the Umma Maiee!

'This train of thought, and the monotonous tones of the chuckoo-chuckoo birds, made me drowsy, and I was away in spirit by the grassy banks of the Wye, in the bower overhung by nut-bushes, where the bubbling waters of the Saints' Well rippled out on its pebbles. It was Easter Sunday, and the country people were there all clad in their best, each with a little mug and a bit of lump sugar—for it is an old custom to drink *eau sucrée* on Easter-day at the Saints' Well. I too was about to dip in with the rest, when suddenly I awoke with a start—Moula was hard pressing my arm. He placed his finger on his lips, and motioned to me to be on the look-out.

'Not a sound was to be heard save the owls and the chuckoo birds, and the rustling of a porcupine, mid the dry leaves underneath.

'I strained my ears to catch the faintest warning, when suddenly a sharp crack was heard close by, as though some large animal had trodden on a dry twig. The Lalla put his mouth to my ear and whispered, "*Sambur.*"

'All was still again for some seconds, when another faint crack was heard. The wary beast was evidently not coming without the strictest investigation as to the safety of the proceeding—a precaution necessary when the lord of the woods so often lay in wait by the water.

'The stillness of night was once more broken by the sharp explosive bell which told me the visitor was a sambur. Approaching footsteps were heard, and down in the glen emerged a fine stag; looking cautiously around he was advancing towards the spring. Seizing my rifle I got ready, when suddenly he stopped; throwing his head high up, with ears advanced, his noble antlers sweeping back with a magnificent curve, he stood for a moment listening intently; then with another sharp bell he plunged forward, with a wheel to the right, and disappeared, crashing through the underwood as he bore up the hill-side.

'"Whoop! whoop! whoop!" rang through the jungle, with a great commotion in the branches of a large tree full of grey monkeys.

'The little brown owl gave an agitated scream, the chuckoo-chuckoo birds appeared all to have gone crazy, the sly little porcupine hid himself away somewhere quietly, the grey plover soared high into the air screaming wildly, and the loud cry of the pea-fowl was answered by a deep electric "*Aa-ōōungh!*" the dreaded sound that made the blood fly faster through the veins of every living creature that heard it, as it reverberated through the echoing hills.

'"Bāgh!" whispered the Lalla.

'Another sullen roar was heard closer still, and the leaves on the bank-side rustled; a light-coloured object peered out of the bushes and looked carefully around. Seeing nothing unusual to arouse his suspicions, he came out and stood before us—a magnificent tiger—in the waning moonlight.

'Advancing to the stream he flung himself in, and, rolling over and over, laved his heated body; then slowly rising he came up to the well-head to drink.

'Now was the time. The well-head was just under my tree; the moon was fast sinking, but there was still ample light for the work. Rapidly passing my heavy rifle down through the boughs, I waited till he bent his head over the spring; then, aiming between the shoulders, I fired both barrels.

'He fell on the spot, and the blood of the tiger mingled with the waters of Umma Maiee.

'The moon sank as the report of the rifle bellowed through the echoing glens; so, wrapping ourselves in our blankets, we slept.

'Morning broke; the little owl was running up and down his gamut for the last time; the chuckoo birds had given way to the crow and the jay From hill to hill resounded the call of the black cuckoo and the harsh cry of the peacock; "quills" had eaten enough of roots, and had gone to sleep away the coming day in his hole under the grislea; the humming-birds were playing in the flowers of the *Butea superba*, and the hurried flap of the green pigeon's wing as she flew past awoke me.

'Had it all been a dream?

'Was it but a mere phase of that dreaming fancy which had led me back to Derby's hills, or had I really shot the jungle monarch under the tree of Doongerdeo?

'Hastily throwing off my plaid I looked over the machaun.

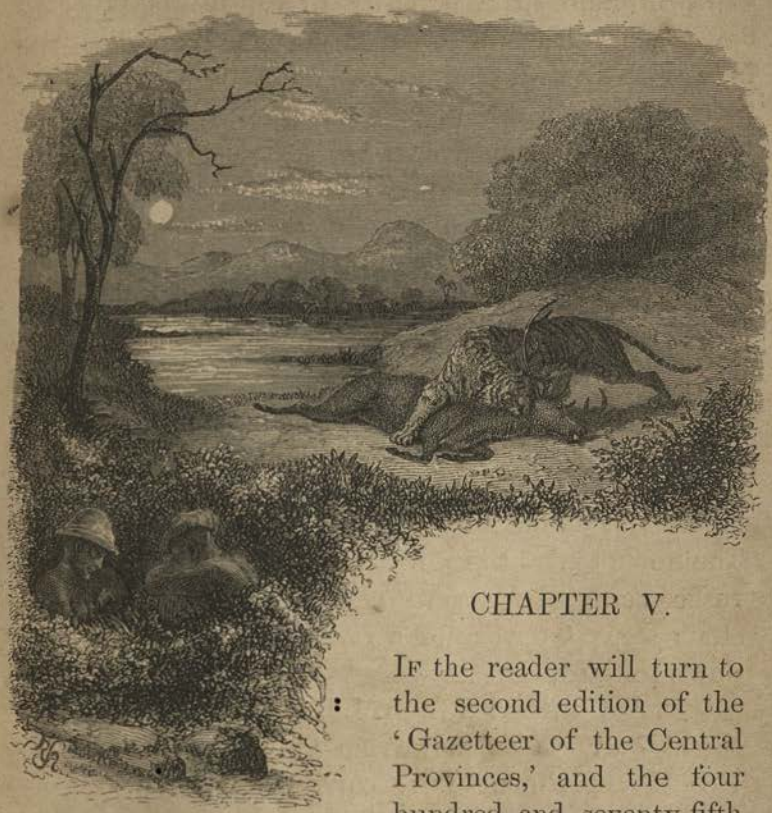
'Yes, there he lay in all his brindled beauty, stretched half across the spring, the limpid water pouring out of the hole in the bank almost into his ear; the usually bright little pool was tinged a dull red by the life-stream that had poured from a bullet wound just under his elbow, where one of the fatal leaden messengers had gone through.

'The guide now made his appearance, and was struck

with astonishment that the deo had permitted to the Saxon what he denied to the Gond. As I descended from the tree he bent down, and, passing his fingers three times over my feet, raised his hands to his forehead. He touched the dead tiger wonderingly, as if he thought it supernatural, and exclaimed to himself "Wah!" Leaving the Lalla at the place, I followed the Gond to the nearest village, to send men to carry home the tiger.

'I have had nights of watching before and since, but never in so lovely a spot, nor one which left such an impression on my mind, as the night at the spring of Umma Maiee.'

INDO-SCYTHIC CROMLECHS.



CHAPTER V.

If the reader will turn to the second edition of the 'Gazetteer of the Central Provinces,' and the four hundred and seventy-fifth page, he will find the station of Seonee thus described:

'Seoní.—The head-quarters of the district of the same name, situated on the road from Nagpúr to Jabalpúr, nearly half-way between the two; in north latitude 22° 4′ and east longitude 79° 39′. It was founded in A.D. 1774 by Mohammud Amín Khan, who made Seoní his head-quarters instead of Chhapárá. It contains large public gardens, a fine market-place, and a noble tank, which has recently been improved and deepened. The principal buildings are the court-house, gaol, school-house, dispensary, and post-office. A handsome church is about

to be erected. The population of the town proper is 8,608 souls; including, however, the two outskirts of Manglí Peth and Bhairao Ganj (in reality component parts of Seoní), the population is 10,621 souls. The town school contains about 175 pupils. The climate of Seoní is salubrious and the temperature moderate. There are excellent available building sites, and the average price of food is slightly less than either at Jabalpúr or Nagpúr.'

This is modern Seoní, or, as we prefer to spell it in our old-fashioned way, Seonee; but the Seonee of twenty years ago, the time of which we write, was very different. There were no buildings to speak of save a few bungalows, and the rude old pile which sheltered the impoverished descendant of the former Mahomedan ruler of the place. The noble tank—the Dul Sagur—was there, but a bed of rushes occupied the south end where now a fine flight of stone steps, the work of a relative of the writer's, leads down to the water.

The road that led from Jubbulpoor to Nagpoor, then the highway to Bombay from Calcutta, and over which Her Majesty's mails were carried in leathern bags slung over ponies, was in parts as much like the bed of a mountain stream as a road; the larger rivers, now spanned by noble bridges, had to be forded, and the smaller ones and the nullahs were crossed by rude wooden structures, which had to be renewed yearly. A few miles to the south of the station was an almost impassable quagmire, into which we one day, having got off the middle path, which had to some extent been consolidated by faggots and logs, got engulfed up to the pommel of our saddle, extricating ourselves with extreme difficulty.

There was only a monthly mail and no telegraph in

those days, and the only railway in India was the short line from Calcutta to Raneegunge. 'Living,' the 'Gazetteer' says, 'is somewhat cheaper than at the two larger stations.' In the days of which we speak, wheat sold for sixty seers for a rupee, and fifty seers of gram could be got for the same money. Everything else was in proportion. There was little or no exportation, the produce of the fertile plateau was consumed within its own boundaries. The farmer made less money, but the poor were the gainers. Wages were low, but the necessaries of life were cheap and abundant. The Mutiny effected a great change. It was not likely that a plateau so noted for its cereal crops as Seonee would remain unnoticed, when large supplies of grain were wanted for the troops employed against the rebels; and although the difficulties of transport had been against the exportation of grain in times of peace, the unusual demand called forth the energies of the Government contractors, notably of one Bunsee Lall Abheer Chund, now a native millionnaire, and the rugged roads of Seonee were covered with droves of Bunjara's bullocks, laden with wheat and gram. We shall have elsewhere to speak of these gipsy tribes, with whose avocation as carriers the iron horse must sadly have interfered. In those days, when goods of bulk had to be transported over country where even carts could not be employed, the Bunjara with his bullocks was indispensable; and though, gipsy-like, his natural proclivities were those of a poacher and a freebooter, still no one could be more rigidly honest in the matter of goods committed to his charge for conveyance from one district to another.

Entering the station of Seonee from the Jubbulpoor side, the rider passes the little village of Lughurwarra on the right, and then a small temple or mosque, and sees

before him a picturesque avenue of bamboo clumps leading up to the station. At the upper end of this avenue there is, on the left, a fine grove of mango trees, and on the right a parade ground. The station itself in those days consisted of a few scattered bungalows, not exceeding half a dozen, for the civil officers of the district—the doctor, the collector of customs, and the officers in charge of a detachment of Madras Infantry. The finest building was the Kutcherry, or deputy-commissioner's office; it was pleasantly situated on a gentle grassy eminence, which sloped down to the borders of the Dul Sagur tank.

To the south and east of the station the hills approach to within a few miles, and in the spurs and isolated knolls, such as those of Siladehi and Butwani, large game was to be had in a morning's walk before breakfast. Many a tiger has met his death there within sight of the white temples of the station, and many a blue bull and sambur have we turned out of those said hills in a morning's stroll.

To the west and north the country is open and almost level, getting towards the north more sterile and rocky, the haunt of innumerable herds of antelope, and of that rare and handsome bird, the great bustard,[1] as difficult to stalk and kill as is a wary old black buck.

From the village of Nereyla, with its beautiful tank, a broad and highly cultivated plain runs southwards past Seonee, as far as the little talooqa of Dongeria, and is bounded on the westward by the district of Chindwarra. The eye here rests on a sea of waving corn-fields, dotted by tree-embosomed hamlets. The Bān Gunga, which takes its rise at the village of Pertapoor, to the south-east

[1] *Eupodotis Edwardsii.*

of the station, sweeps round to the westward, crossing the Nagpoor road about seven miles to the south of Seonee, and then, taking a northerly course through the fertile plain we are just speaking of, it enters a more rugged and rocky part, and, sweeping round again to the eastward, it flows past the old fort and town of Chappara, the ancient capital of the district, and thus onwards to the eastern frontier, when, being joined by the Thanwur, it bends again to the south, and forms the boundary separating Seonee from Mandla and the newly created district of Balaghat; thus in its course so far describing almost a circle.

There are few places in which the naturalist, the sportsman, and the lover of nature, find to their hands so much to engage and delight them as in this favourite old station of ours. We have botanized in the hills about Mylee and Piperia in the morning, and shot tigers there in the afternoon. Even the ladies of the station have ridden through the lovely little glens, over the laterite paths that wind like gravel walks through the woods, loading their attendants with fragrant flowers and curious creepers, listening to the birds, and watching the butterflies, or looking with interest at the gambols of the grey monkeys or the graceful motion of a rib-faced deer; and, on the afternoon of the same day, those glens have echoed with the sharp reports of rifles and the savage roar of the stricken tiger.

How many a time have we set off when, at early dawn, the blue mists were rolling off the Nagar Khana peak, for a stalk after blue bull and sambur, in the valleys beyond Ragadehi; or, following the course of the Gunga on the westward plain, our toil has been rewarded by a brace of koolung and a fine black buck;

and back again to a ten o'clock breakfast and a long day's office work to follow.

Those were pleasant days when, full of youthful energy, the evils of dyspepsia and indigestion were unknown; no fatigue was too great, no enterprise too rash. Sleep came as soundly on the hard ground under a bush as on the softest bed. Hunger was the sauce that made all dishes palatable. No chemists' bills hung like an incubus over us every quarter. The only powder we thought of was gunpowder, and our blue pills were twelve bore. *Mais nous avons changé tout cela*, and, alas! the change for us, physically speaking, is not for the best.

A party of three were dining in Fordham's bungalow, one evening towards the end of March—our two friends and the doctor. The mouth of the latter had been watering at the adventures of the past two months, eagerly narrated by Milford, with an occasional corroboration by Fordham, who seemed inclined to let his young friend do all the talking, he being rather reticent on shikar subjects; or, as the doctor would say, one had to cut a story out of him. Poor doctor! he was as keen a shikaree as the rest, but his duties would not allow of his going far from the station, and, though he got an occasional rap at a panther or tiger, he longed for a trip in the bison jungles of Sonawani or the axis-haunted banks of the Hirrie.

'Ah!' said he, rising as the cloth was removed, 'don't talk of it any more, or I shall be tempted to turn deserter and go off. Come, Fordham, I'll give you a beating at chess. Milford, I see, has gone out into the moonlight to think about his sweethearts.'

'Not so, doctor, not so,' answered the young man,

'though it is a lovely sort of night for sentimentality; but as you two are settling down to chess, I think I'll have out a camel and trot over with Boodhoo Khan to Barelipar; he has dug a beautiful hole by the edge of a tank there, and this is just the sort of night for sitting out.'

'My dear boy, don't you be daft, but stay at home like a Christian. Why, Barelipar is eight miles off if it's an inch, and you'll get nothing but a fever if you go there. I'll shave your head, and blister your side, and give you blue pills that would upset a hippopotamus, if you come into my hands after this, as sure as my name is Davison.'

'All right, doctor; I'll go to old Billy MacVitie for some globules if anything happens to me.'

'MacVitie be hanged for a doited old ape, with his homœopathy and his globules and his tinctures. All very well for amateur doctoring, but I'd undertake to swallow his whole stock without feeling better or worse for it. He may thank his stars he's got the constitution of an ostrich, or he'd have been under my hands before now, and he may come yet.'

'We'll hope not, doctor, for his sake and yours. However, the camel is waiting, so good night.

'I shan't come home till morning,
Till daylight does appear!'

So singing, Milford sallied forth. Boodhoo Khan, a tall, spare man, with a goat's beard, a fair shikaree but one of the greatest braggarts in the station, and on that account not much favoured by Fordham, was waiting with the camel, which was lying down in readiness. A few blankets were stowed away, two rifles and ammunition, and Milford getting up, Boodhoo Khan, who was already mounted and acting as driver, made the camel get up

which it did in the usual ungainly, impatient way that all camels have, and away they trotted at a swinging pace.

We have never had any patience with those maudlin poetasters who talk about the patient camel, the gentle camel, knowing nothing about the creature. There is one nursery sort of rhyme by a talented authoress which to us has always been particularly irritating; it begins

> Camel, thou art good and mild,
> Mightst be guided by a child!

Good gracious! no child of ours should ever go within ten feet of one of those most vicious, obstinate, cantankerous brutes, on any consideration whatever. We have seen lots of camels, but never one with a sweet temper; some are better than others and *for* camels may be amiable, but of all the fidgetty, hasty, grumbling, apparently discontented members of creation, write down the camel at the head of the list. When he bites he holds on with the tenacity of a bull-dog, and only extreme measures will make him let go; when told to lie down he roars, and when told to get up he does the same; and as for the last straw being put on to break his back, the camel protests from the first, and goes on protesting so long as any one goes near him, whether with a straw or without. In India we recognise two kinds of camel—the ordinary baggage camel, with his ungainly, joint-dislocating stride, and the *Sarndnee*, or riding camel, a more gamey-looking creature, with well-broken paces, which carries his rider fifty miles like a bird, with the greatest ease, after the knack of sitting him is once attained.

They all have their little amiabilities; one dislikes dogs, another horses; one we used to ride hated his own species, and charged them savagely when he had a chance; but he was a good beast on the whole, and did not try to

nip one's legs or kick one over when mounting, or bolt under trees, or any of those thousand-and-one little pleasantries to which his race are addicted.

It was nearly eleven o'clock by the time Milford reached Barelipar. Leaving the camel in the village, he and the shikaree made their way to the tank adjoining the forest which stretched in a sombre line before them; at a convenient spot near the edge Boodhoo Khan had dug a pit about four feet deep, and sufficiently large to hold them both. A few branches were planted round it to hide the hole as well as the hunters who lay in wait, and, when the blankets were thrown in, the two men took their place and patiently waited for some animal to come up to the water.

Boodhoo Khan declared that sambur would certainly come during the night, as there had been no fresh tracks for two days Sambur only drink every third day—Nylgaie drink daily.

We would crave our reader's pardon here for another digression, whilst we say a few words about night-shooting in pits or from trees. With most Europeans this is not a favourite system, and it is run down by many as being unsportsmanlike and what not; but chiefly, we think, on account of their being unsuccessful in it. Be it as it may, it is nevertheless sometimes necessary to adopt it in order to rid villages of those dreadful scourges—man-eaters—in places inaccessible to elephants, and unless the European will sometimes practise this method he will assuredly fail in it at the time when success is ardently desired. The native is much more skilful in this kind of shooting owing to his greater patience, and also probably to his keener vision; and it is the want of these two that mostly deters Englishmen from trying it oftener. In our younger days we were always partial to it in the bright

moonlight nights of the hot season. There was a charm in the wildness and loneliness of the forests at midnight; something fresh to be noticed each time in the habits of the animals we sought, or of the night-birds around us; and in many cases there was a spice of danger, which in the opinion of some is necessary to constitute sport.

There are two kinds of night-shooting, one from a machaun or tree, and the other from a pit.

Undoubtedly, as far as safety from the attacks of animals and the noxious vapours of the ground are concerned, the former is the best, but in the acceptation of the people above mentioned it is less sportsmanlike on this account. We confess we do not see it in this light. Sitting up for ferocious animals at night is generally less for excitement and pleasure than for the purpose of getting rid somehow of a dangerous pest which we may not be able to get hold of in daylight. If the latter were always possible, who, with the soul of a hunter, would sit up all night for a pot-shot when he could rouse the tiger from his lair and meet him openly? But for a man to expose himself to the attacks of a savage and night-seeing animal at a time when his own vision fails is extreme foolhardiness.

A pit is useful where no convenient tree exists, and should be well screened with green boughs, but we must raise our voice against sitting in a pit over water at any time of the year. We speak from experience, having suffered from its evil effects. The price paid for getting an animal is generally fever, and it is too expensive to the constitution to indulge in much of that in India.

All animals can be shot over water, in addition to which the carnivora can be shot over baits, living or dead, and deer and bison over favourite crops, a regular run or mohree, and over salt-licks; but all require an amount

of patience and practice which few Englishmen care to attain. Everything is open to abuse, and there are few things in favour of which a word or two cannot be said, so let us say what we can for the system.

It has been stigmatized as cruel butchery of an unsuspecting animal, which is impelled by thirst to come to the pool where the hunter lies in wait. We confess that this is a natural and not altogether unjust conclusion; but all so-called sport is more or less butchery, and should not be attempted without reason. We have no right to take the life of any creature without cause, and the protection of life and property, the feeding of a camp, or a population whose greatest treat is a meal of flesh, and the destruction of animals hurtful to crops, are the only excuses for the hunter's life; and then the desire should be to kill as mercifully as possible. What is usually called fair sport, and giving the animal a chance, is generally his getting away with a long-shot bullet in him, to die by degrees or be a cripple for life; whereas the steady shot at a short distance kills at once. As for the killing of carnivorous animals at night, when we consider the amount of life, human and quadrupedal, yearly destroyed by them, our scruples in ridding the country of these pests *in any way* need not be great; but at the same time they should not be talked of as exploits, for there is nothing in them to boast of; the lad of ten, provided he holds his gun straight, is as good as the veteran of fifty. It only requires you to be patient, quiet, to take your time and not be in a flurry, and any one who chooses can do this. On this account it ranks perhaps the lowest in the order of venery; but still it should not be sneered at or despised, for it is not everyone who can afford to keep elephants, or has the iron constitution requisite to stand a tedious hunt on foot in the burning sun of an Indian summer day.

An older and more veteran sportsman would have spent the night we speak of in his bed—as the doctor expressed it, like a Christian; but Milford was young and eager, and had the craving for excitement consistent with his age.

Fordham remembered the time when he was the same, and therefore he did not attempt to check his young friend—to make a sneering remark was not in his nature—knowing that in time Milford would gain experience, and learn to rest on his laurels. He had therefore met the youth's proposal to sit out at Barelipar with a quiet smile, and did not join the doctor in his protest against the proceeding.

Now to return to our watchers in the pit. Two hours had they been there, and when Milford looked at his watch, as he had been doing from time to time, by the light of the moon, he saw it was nearly one o'clock, the hour when sambur might be expected. He longed to get out and stretch his legs, and envied Boodhoo Khan his facility for doubling up his knees to his chin and resting comfortably.

The night was perfectly still, there was not a ripple on the glassy surface of the mere, the merry trilling of the crickets and the sibilations of the nocturnal bush warblers were the only sounds that broke the monotonous silence. Now and then a faint rustle in the dark wood made the watchers prick up their ears, but nothing seemed to come of it. Knowing, however, the numberless cautions with which the sambur approaches, they were not without hope.

At last they discerned something moving under the shadow of the jungle, and Milford, using a small binocular glass, made out that it was a sambur, but whether stag or

hind he could hardly decide; from the size, however, he argued that it was a male.

For full ten minutes did the wary creature keep his position under the trees; at last, when the young Englishman's patience was nearly worn out, he slowly advanced towards the water.

As soon as he cleared the shadow of the forest, and stepped out into the moonlight, his branching antlers at once decided the doubtful point; he was a stag, and a fine one too. He came on steadily; till he was about forty yards from the pit, when he suddenly stopped and, throwing his nose into the air, seemed to suspect something wrong.

Fatal pause! The young sportsman, stifling a feeling of pity which came over him as he watched the graceful motions of the unconscious animal, now raised his weapon and fired; and, shot through the heart, the stag fell on the spot.

Boodhoo Khan sprang out of the pit and buried his keen knife in the throat of the victim with the customary prayer, and as he fingered the fat sides and haunch he thought of the *kawabs* of the next day.

Knowing well that no other deer would come and drink that night, the two men rolled themselves up in their blankets, and, disposing of their forms as best they could in the bottom of the pit, they went to sleep.

Milford was the first to wake, and throwing off his blanket he stood up, and stretched his cramped limbs and looked around; but where was the stag?

'Boodhoo Khan! Boodhoo Khan!'

'Huzoor!' sleepily answered that individual, unrolling himself.

'Did I not shoot a sambur during the night?'

'Bé shuk, khodawund' (without doubt, my lord!)

'Then where is it?—look and see!'

'Soobhan Allah! kya taajoob ke bat! without doubt a tiger has carried it off—yes, see here, my lord, see here! look at his footprints.'

There was no doubt about it; the huge prints of the tiger were plainly visible in the sandy soil, and a broad trail was left as he had dragged away the carcass of the stag.

Milford took off the caps from his rifles and replaced them with fresh ones, and, accompanied by the shikaree, cautiously followed up the track; when they got to the edge of the wood they found the remains of the sambur, the haunch having been eaten away, which was more a subject for regret to Boodhoo Khan than to Milford, who rejoiced rather in the possession of the head and antlers.

At first he thought of cutting off the head and taking it back with them, leaving the body to the Gonds, but on further consideration he ordered Boodhoo Khan to get a cart from the village, and take it down to the station just as it was, to show his friends the work of the night.

On his return to the station he found the compound of Fordham's bungalow a scene of commotion; elephants were having howdahs strapped on, shikarees in the verandahs were looking to their masters' wallets, to see that powder flasks were full, and bullets already sewed up in patches; old Sheykha was there in full jungle costume, and behind him stood three villagers, who had run down with news. Horses were ready saddled, and a party of eager sportsmen were making a hasty breakfast in the dining-room. Milford was greeted with a shout as he entered.

'Just in time, my boy; just in time!' exclaimed the doctor, with his mouth full of pie.

'We had almost given you up, Ernest,' said Fordham; 'here, set to work and eat something sharp. A tiger has killed and eaten a cow near Ragadehi, and we hope to bag him, although if he gets into the thick jungle beyond I am afraid we may whistle for him.'

Milford set to work at once, and between the attack on the various dishes told the story of his adventure during the night.

'Precious lucky for you, my lad,' said the doctor, 'that the tiger did not walk off with you instead of the deer. I told you it was a daft proceeding, sitting out in a hole in that way; and going to sleep in one was worse still.'

'How are you going, doctor?' asked the young man, adroitly turning the attack.

'Going! on an elephant, my boy, an elephant all to myself, an A-oner, too; only she's so lively we cannot have her in the compound with the others.'

'What, that skittish-looking female with the young one I saw waiting outside on the road?'

'The very same; she's the property of our good friend Major Beech here, who has kindly lent her to me for this occasion.'

'I say, you'll have to look out for squalls with that youngster; I saw her charge Bussunta like a fiend just now.'

'She's quiet enough,' rejoined Major Beech, a good-looking, open-faced, fair-haired man, with a merry twinkle in his eye; "she's quiet enough if they will only keep her away from the other females. You keep with me, doctor; she doesn't mind the tusker in the least, and it's amusing to see how he patronizes the young 'un; but it's up with the black flag if any of the others come near; but she's a good beast and staunch.'

'Now then, gentlemen,' said Fordham, coming into the room, 'time's nearly up. I've started the elephants, and in half an hour we'll be after them. Ernest, you may have Bussunta all to yourself to-day, so I dare say you can give somebody a lift. I am going to take the "Muckna," and Smith is coming with me in the back seat of the howdah. Here, Nusseer Khan! Nusseer Khan!—where are you?'

'My lord,' said the old jemadar, 'Nusseer Khan went off early to Ragadehi to collect beaters.'

'Oh, all right! what I wanted to ask was, have we got any fireworks?'

'There are twenty *anars*, and six bundles of *phuttakas*.'

'That will do. Now, my friends, to horse! to horse!'

In ten minutes more the whole party were going along at a smart hand gallop down the road. At Ragadehi they found the elephants waiting, the one allotted to the doctor being kept at a considerable distance from the others.

The kill was to the north of the village, on the edge of a ravine which opened out in several branches, leading to a heavily-wooded valley beyond, into which if the tiger got he might, as Fordham had observed, be whistled for. It was settled, therefore, that each branch should be watched by the hunters, there being four elephants on the ground; and the beaters were to beat down gently, not with drums and a great noise, but simply to move along, talking and throwing a few stones into likely covers.

We will now leave the others to take care of themselves and accompany the doctor.

His elephant was a remarkably fine female, but there was a wild look about her which was not very reassuring. She could not have been very long in captivity, for her

calf was but a few months old; still she seemed obedient, and the mahout assured the doctor she was quite manageable. So he prepared to mount; but here his confidence received rather a rude shock, as did also his body, for as he was climbing into the howdah she suddenly sprang up and tumbled him head foremost in, the reason for this unlooked-for demonstration being the lively and sociable disposition of the young one, who, seeing the other elephants moving off, broke from the arms of the *charcutta*[1] and trotted off after them. The anxious mother, however, soon collared him, and for a time he trotted along most complacently, till at last they arrived at their allotted post. Here, however, the poor doctor found himself very much in the same predicament as an old bachelor in charge of a baby in church; if the little brute was held he squealed and made all sorts of eccentric noises, and if left to himself he would wander off and his fond mamma would be after him with a rush. Altogether it was most distressing, and the doctor anathematized the elephant and her calf, and the mahout, and himself for being so stupid as to take her. At last, losing all patience, he ordered the charcutta to tie the little one to the mother's neck. They were at this time about twenty yards from the edge of the ravine, and his impatience was increased by one of the signal-men in a tree about a hundred yards higher up making violent dumb-show to him, to the effect that the tiger was stealing along the nullah. Urging the mahout to go on, the elephant advanced about ten paces, and then came to a dead stop. Getting her young one under her chest, she curled up her trunk defiantly, and would not budge an inch in spite of all the blows of a heavy cudgel showered on her with plentiful abuse by the

[1] An attendant who usually follows an elephant on foot. Literally, a cutter of forage (*chara*), which is his chief duty.

unfortunate mahout, who was having a sort of tattoo played on his back by the butt-end of the doctor's gun. The man was evidently somewhat afraid of her, for though he had the usual steel hankuss, or driving hook, he did not attempt to use it. The poor doctor was almost frantic; here was a tiger walking off before his very nose, and the obstinate old elephant would not move a foot. Every now and then she uncoiled her trunk, and felt for her little one, and then resumed her former attitude.

'Let go the *bucha*!' yelled the doctor; 'confound you, let go the *bucha*!' and the half-frightened charcutta, thinking the sahib had gone mad, and was going to shoot him, did as he was bid, and in another moment the calf was free. After cutting a few uncouth little capers, young Snuffles toddled off to the edge of the ravine, and tumbled head foremost in.

Whether he tumbled on the tiger or not no one knows, but the doctor declares he heard a savage grunt, as if that animal had been taken by surprise. However, he had not much time for thought of any kind, for, with a shrill trumpet, the anxious mother was after her truant. How they got to the bottom of the ravine the doctor never knew; he had a sensation of everything being 'all legs and wings;' he lost his guns, he lost his hat, and he lost his temper; he held on like grim death, as he was whipped in the face by bamboos, poked in the ribs by dry branches, and jolted in a most excruciating manner, whilst the excited animal tore after her offspring, which gambolled ahead in a most playful fashion. Every minute he expected to be dashed against some projecting branch, which would have swept him and the howdah off, maimed and wrecked; at last there was a gleam of hope, the ravine widened, and the chase was continued with comparative freedom from the inconveniences and

dangers above alluded to. A little further on the channel divided, leaving an island in the middle, with a gentle slope up from one side, and an abrupt scarp of fifteen feet or so on the other. Up this little Snuffles toddled, and, being by this time rather out of breath, suffered his fond parent to overtake him. Here they had the truant at last, but how were they to secure him? The mahout did not like to get off the elephant's neck, and the doctor did not care to meddle with such an uncanny pair; so they waited for the charcutta to come up.

In the meantime Snuffles, having regained breath, and being desirous of distinguishing himself still further, deliberately marched to the edge of the scarp, and tumbled flop over on his back in the sandy bed of the nullah, a proceeding which made his mother somewhat uneasy; but sundry sound whacks administered by the mahout kept her quiet, especially as she saw that her hopeful was playing about in the sand, and trying to climb the opposite bank—twisting his little trunk round the shrubs and grass by way of hauling himself up, when of course they gave way, and he rolled on his back again. All this was well enough, but unfortunately at this juncture Milford, on Bussunta, came along the top of the opposite bank, and the little one, seeing her, redoubled his efforts to get up. The jealous mother could not stand this, and uttering a piercing scream she rushed to the edge. The mahout, knowing the danger, flung away his cudgel, and, lifting the sharp steel hook with both hands, he drove it deep into her head and held her back in sheer desperation. The powerful animal winced at the blow, and fell on her knees, violently shaking her head. At this time they were almost hanging over the precipice. The doctor shouted to Milford to take his elephant

further away, which was instantly done, and the charcutta at this critical moment rushed up and secured the truant calf. The mother rose from her knees and backed from the edge, and, making her kneel down once more, the doctor got off, vowing that if he had to walk all the way home, nothing would induce him to mount such a brute again.

The tiger in the meantime had passed up the nullah, and, breaking out of cover at the upper end, took off across open country for the heavy jungle beyond. The doctor and Milford between them should have guarded this point, but they were so taken up with the vagaries of the former's elephant that the tiger got away unnoticed. After a while, however, he came within sight of Major Beech, who instantly gave chase, and it was a picturesque sight to see the huge tusker urged to his full speed across the open ground, straining every nerve to cut off the tiger's retreat, who changed his sneaking walk into a lobbing gallop as he saw he was being pursued. At first the elephant had gained considerably on him, but lost ground as he changed his pace, and the heavy jungle was now but a few yards off, when Beech ordered his mahout to stop. A few yards, more or less, in a long shot makes but little difference, and the veteran sportsman knew that the tiger would, in all probability, stop and look back before entering the thicket.

Nor was he wrong; the cover gained, the tiger turned and watched for a few seconds, attentively regarding the stationary object in the fields behind him; he did not notice the deadly tube levelled at him, and the fine sights being brought to bear on his brawny shoulder.

'It's no end of a long shot,' muttered Beech to himself, 'but here goes; hit or miss.'

The sharp report was answered by a sullen grunt as

the tiger dropped to his knees, and then, recovering himself, dashed into the jungle.

Beech was pleased and yet dissatisfied with the result.

'I'm afraid I've made a man-eater of that fellow, Fordham,' he remarked as the other came up. 'I never like long shots at tigers; one is never certain. I aimed far back too, but I'm certain I hit him in the shoulder, and the next thing we shall hear of him will be his taking to man-eating. I wish I had let him alone.'

'Well, we will hope not,' rejoined Fordham; 'there are as many chances against as for it. The ball may have passed through the shoulder-blade into a vital part, or you may have hit him further back than you imagine; the wound may mortify; and, on the other hand, it may be so slight as to give but temporary inconvenience; but at all events we will keep good watch on him.'

They were here rejoined by the doctor and Milford, and were considerably amused at the adventures of the former, told with a comical mixture of good-humour and crossness: now waxing irate as he thought of the loss of the tiger which had come his way; now laughing, in spite of himself, as he described the waywardness of 'that confounded little black imp,' but for whose perverseness he might have been the envied one of the party, with a fine tiger-skin to spread on his study floor.

'My dear fellow, it was enough to make Job throw pots at his wife's head; it was indeed!'

However, nothing more was to be said and done at Ragadehi, so they all mounted, and galloped back through the blazing sun to the station.

The next day, as Fordham and Milford were getting ready for camp, one of two young officers belonging to the detachment came running over, to ask Fordham if he could do anything for a little terrier which had been

bitten by a snake. He went over to their bungalow at once, but was too late; the little sufferer was already in the throes of death, whilst a vicious-looking reptile lay on the floor, in a corner, in a sort of stupor. It was about three feet long, with a very thick body and short tapering tail, not uniformly fining off as in the case of many other snakes, but with a decided distinction between body and tail; in colour it was a rich brown, with rings, about the size of a thrush's egg, of black, edged with yellowish white, all over its body. Fordham at once pronounced it to be the Tic Polonga,[1] or cowrie snake, so called from its rings being the size and shape of the cowrie shell, and said it was most deadly.

'Why, Smith, there, carried it home in his pocket!' said one of the young officers; 'we found it out by Piperia this morning.'

'Well, I would advise Smith not to carry home another,' said Fordham; 'he has escaped this time owing to the natural sluggishness of the creature, and I suspect from his appearance that he is gorged.'

'I thought he was harmless,' remarked Smith; 'the natives said he did not bite, but killed people by blowing on them, and, knowing many of their ideas to be foolish, I pocketed him as he looked good-tempered.'

'I'll soon show you what he is,' said Fordham; 'here, tell one of your servants to bring me an old hookah, one which has been long in use.'

A very filthy old thing having been discovered behind the cook-room door (which, as one of the party observed, might account for the general flavour of stale tobacco in the curries), Fordham proceeded to split open the wooden pipe, on which the earthen pipe-bowl is placed, and scraped out from the cavity enough of a

[1] *Daboia elegans.*

black paste to make a large pill, which he affixed to a long splinter of bamboo; then, going out into the garden, he cut a stick with a forked end, and, pinning down the snake's head, he forced the pill deep down its throat and let it go. For a few minutes its contortions were excessive, but it gradually stiffened and was to all appearance dead. He then slipped a noose over its head, one of his young companions wishing to do it with his fingers, but Fordham warned him never to trust to appearances.

'I have known,' said he, 'a snake, which I thought dead, by a violent effort evict the pill before the nicotine had taken effect, and become as lively as ever.'

When, however, the noose was fairly on, the reptile was suspended to a rafter of the verandah, and, whilst a servant held the tail, Fordham skilfully eviscerated it, and disclosed a field rat which it had swallowed that morning.

'That accounts for his not drinking the milk,' observed one of the young men. 'Smith put him on the table and poked his nose into a saucer of milk, and then, finding he was not amusing, he threw him on the floor and set poor little Crib at him; when Crib gave him a shake he turned round and bit him, and in three minutes the dog was on his back in convulsions.'

'It was a cruel thing for both dog and snake,' remarked Fordham, 'and a merciful escape for you two, who might be now as poor Crib is. Look at these fangs —see the length, far exceeding those of the cobra; see under the eye this well-filled bag of poison, and thank the Lord for your deliverance, and whatever you do again, Smith, with regard to snakes, never put one into your pocket; it seems to me marvellous how you escaped being bitten. Always give a snake the benefit of a doubt,

and assume him to be poisonous, especially if his head be of the shape of an ace of spades.'

The next morning, as the camp was moving out of Fordham's compound, an absurd incident took place. Three fine young camels, which had just been engaged for camp work, were proceeding slowly down the gravel walk in front of the house; they had been all properly loaded, two with tents and the third with office records in huge leather trunks; they were all attached in the usual fashion, nose and tail, by long slender cords, and were in charge of one man who was with the leader. In going out of the gate one of the camels struck his load against the branch of a babool tree, and, whether the shock produced any particular effect on his nerves or not, he began to caper like a turkey on a hot plate; his ungainly motions were speedily imitated by the others, and the trio presented a most ludicrous sight; but the cords soon gave way and the loads tumbled off, and away set off the emancipated camels across country. One which was nearest the camel man was soon arrested, but the two others set off—one towards Ragadehi, the other with the leather trunks along the high road in the Jubbulpoor direction; as the load of the latter was valuable, both for the records and a certain sum of money in hard cash, a couple of sowars were sent after him at once, but he got nearly as far as Bundole—ten miles off—before he was caught and brought back. The other truant, who took the Ragadehi line, was never heard of again from that day to this; whether he was pulled down and killed by a tiger, or whether he was caught and carried off by some one who looked upon him as lawful capture, no one knows; it has always been a matter of speculation what became of that particular camel.

Fordham had marked out a nice little tour, which

would bring them back to the station in the course of a fortnight or three weeks, round by the talooqa of Doongeria, and along the Chindwarra border, with a divergence to Machagora for a few days' mahseer fishing, and then on to Chappara and back to Seonee; but the *contretemps* of the camels prevented a very long march the first day, so the tents were pitched under a fine old tope of trees at Chownree, about six miles from Seonee.

Chownree is a charming place for pic-nics in the cold weather: a magnificent grove of mango trees, a fine old tank, pretty rides in the vicinity, and game for the sportsman within easy reach. During the three days they halted there, waiting for fresh camels or buffaloes, Milford added considerably to his collection of birds. The tank swarmed with water fowl, the pheasant-tailed[1] and bronze-winged[2] jacanas and the purple coot being most abundant. The former are examples of the wonderful way in which the Creator adapts the forms of His creatures to the lives they are to lead. The jacana inhabits only those sheets of water which are covered with floating leaves of water-lilies and other aquatic plants, and, to enable him to run freely over these, look at the disproportionate length of his toes and the prolongation of the hind claw. We do not at all hold with those theorists who argue on the law of development till they lose sight of the infinite wisdom of the Almighty in their ingenious deductions. Now, how should the jacana be so developed? We will cut down his claws and toes to the ordinary limits, he would then resemble the stilt and waders; what should lead him to leave his accustomed habits and take to mounting the floating leaves to such an extent as to create an abnormal condition of foot? Of course this would be met by the theorists

[1] *Hydrophasianus chirurgus.* [2] *Metopidius indicus.*

aforesaid with an assertion that he did so, and his altered circumstances induced the peculiarity above noticed. We prefer to believe that the Creator made him as he is, and placed him where he is, to clear the plants that keep the water pure from the insects that would destroy them, thus making him an agent in that wonderful economy which pervades all creation.

The jacana always reminded us of a bird on snow-shoes, the principle of the foot being precisely the same, the long toes forming the framework of the shoe. The young bird is a most ludicrous object, as the feet are nearly the size of those of the adult, and consequently quite out of proportion to the small body.

The purple coot [1] is a very handsome bird, and, if it could be naturalized in England, would be a great addition to our ornamental waters. It is found in parts of Southern Europe and even as far north as Provence and the Dauphiné in France. It is about the size of an ordinary hen; above indigo blue, paling into cerulean on the throat and breast, and deep purple below; bright red bill, and shield on the forehead, and reddish legs. It frequents grassy lakes and tanks, and, making its nest of grass at the edge of the water, lays from six to eight eggs about the size of a bantam's, of a reddish buff or deep salmon colour, much spotted with dark red and purple.

The tank at Chownree also swarmed with the little Indian grebe, the *pundoobi* [2] (literally water-diver) of the natives—a cousin of the English dab-chick—a most amusing little bird. It pops under water and comes up again, buoyant as a cork and dry as a powder puff—a pretty little fellow it is.

The trees at Chownree also swarmed with curious birds,

[1] *Porphyrio poliocephalus.* [2] *Podiceps philippensis.*

and Milford and the Lalla were well occupied in preparing specimens. Hawk-catching was one of the Lalla's specialities, and one morning he caught a very fine *tirmootee*,[1] or merlin, a female, which he predicted would in another fortnight show great sport. His method of snaring was as follows:—Having trapped a small field mouse, he attached it to a cord fastened to a small peg; on either side of this bait were loosely stuck in the ground several slender twigs well covered with birdlime; the hawk dashing at the mouse bore off on her wings the limed sticks, which soon brought her to the ground. He also had another way of catching these birds; instead of the limed twigs, two slender bamboo slips supported a net made of fine black silk, into which the hawk fell in its blind swoop. The Indian hawkers as well as the cheetah trainers never rear the young; they say that hunting comes but by the example of parents, and that artificial training never answers; yet we believe that nestlings were brought up for hawking by our ancestors in England.

On the third day the camp moved on to Simuria, the lost camel having been replaced by three stout buffalo bulls. But misfortunes, they say, never come singly, and so it seemed in this case; for when they had got within a mile of camp they were overtaken by a breathless runner, who said that one of the remaining camels had slipped in descending a small *ghat*, and had broken his leg, and could not move.

'We had better ride back, Ernest,' said Fordham; 'the poor brute must be shot if it be true that his leg is broken.'

'Certainly,' replied the other, turning his horse.

[1] *Hypotriorchis chicquera.*

So back they rode, and found the camel standing on three legs, the fourth being broken below the knee.

'Well, the sooner the poor creature is put out of pain the better,' remarked Fordham, taking his rifle from Nusseer Khan.

'Khodawund,' pleaded the man, 'if you would only wait till the Moulvie sahib comes up to hālāl the camel, we would all eat it. None of us here know the right formula for the camel; it is a special one, on account of his long neck.'

'Where is the Moulvie, then?'

'He is coming, my lord; he is just a little way behind.'

'Has any one gone for him?'

'Oomrao Buksh has run back to hurry him on.'

'Well, I'll give you ten minutes, and if he is not up then I won't let that beast suffer any longer.'

So saying he pulled out his watch and waited. The ten minutes passed and no Moulvie.

Poor Nusseer Khan looked very blank as his master rose and took his rifle. As Fordham walked up to the camel, the animal looked at him wonderingly, and he could not get the spot he wanted to aim at, so he walked round and round, but the camel still followed him with his eyes, and thus another five minutes passed.

'I say, Ernest, this will never do,' said he at last. 'I want to put a bullet into his ear. Do you go round on the other side and shout, or throw your cap up and divert his attention for a minute.'

Milford rose to do so; and Nusseer Khan muttered joyfully, 'Allah shookr! here is the Moulvie sahib at last; that's right, Huzrut! de chabook, de chabook! ply the whip, ply the whip,' as the old Moulvie urged on his fat pony by repeated blows over his flanks.

When Milford got to the other side of the camel he gave a shout and flung up his hat; at that moment a bullet passed through the animal's ear, and out at the crown of his head, and he fell like a stone on the spot. The Moulvie rushed forward with Nusseer Khan's long Afghan knife, and, repeating the invocation, he slashed the neck in three places, and the much-prized feast was theirs.

'The villains!' said Fordham, laughing, 'I believe they would rejoice if one of my camels were to come to grief every week.'

'They seem to think highly of camel's flesh, like the Arabs,' remarked Milford.

'Yes, all Mahomedans think much of it, and it is not bad. I vote we have some for dinner; it's a fine, healthy young animal, and we could not have a better specimen on which to try the experiment.'

'I should like it by all means; let us have a camel curry.'

'Here, Nusseer Khan, when you have this cut up, take a piece to Chand Khan, and tell him I want a curry.'

A broad grin lighted up each dusky face as the order was given. The sahib was going to eat some of the *oonth* too. 'Shabash! it was well the Moulvie sahib came up in time!'

The talooqa of Doongeria consists of a group of villages in the south-west corner of the Seonee plateau, bounded on the west by the river Pench, and on the south by the ghats of the Satpura range.

It is but semi-cultivated, and but a short time before was almost virgin forest, as its name implies, doonger being the Gondee for forest; Doonger-deo is the deity which presides over the woods; doonger surree is a forest path, and Doongeria a forest village, and Donger-tal,

which gives a name to the southern talooqa of Seonee, is the lake of the forests, there being a noble tank there. The names of all the villages are easily to be traced to local peculiarities, and are derived from Gondee or other tongues, according to the nationality of the original settlers. Sometimes two villages separated by a stream will have names totally dissimilar, but agreeing in signification—such as the villages of Moorh-air and Palaspanee, the one in Gondee, and the other in Hindostanee, meaning the waters of the butea, from the occurrence of that tree on the banks of the river.

Simuria, where our friends had camped for the day, evidently took its name from a large semul tree, the alteration of *l* into *r* being a very common thing. The village of Palaspanee above mentioned is generally called Paraspanee.

As they neared the village Fordham's quick ear caught a faint cry, which came from a considerable height.

'Demoiselles, I declare, at this late season of the year! Ernest, I must have one of those if possible.'

'What are they?' exclaimed Milford, staring up into the sky, where in the blue vault above he descried a V-shaped phalanx of birds coming towards them.

'I do hope they will alight,' said Fordham anxiously; 'I have but one specimen left, and it is moth-eaten. Those are demoiselle cranes, Ernest, the loveliest of their family, as well as good eating. They are not very common, and generally come in the cold weather. I suspect these are stragglers on their way to more genial climes, and they won't stop to be shot at. Ah, ha! I don't despair yet. That looks promising,' he continued, as the leader of the flock took a sweep downwards, followed by the rest with almost military precision.

'Here, Azim Khan, ride after those cranes, and mark where they alight; then come and tell me.'

Away went the sowar after them, and his master followed slowly, also keeping his eye on the birds; another swoop down and they disappeared.

'They have alighted somewhere, Ernest. Nusseer Khan, where are those Eley's cartridges? Ernest, what shot have you?'

'Number seven.'

'Oh, that's much too small; here, take two of my cartridges and cut them open; they are too large for your 14-bore gun, being No. 12. These birds are extremely wary, and hard to get near, and only heavy shot will answer.'

'Are these what they call koolung, or coolen?'

'They are what some people call by that name, but the koolung is another bird, far inferior to this both in beauty and flavour; the native name of this is karkarra[1] and not koolung,[2] which is the common crane. Here's Azim Khan. What news, Azim Khan?'

'Does my lord see that line of jamoon bushes, with the dry stump of a pakur tree sticking out?'

'Yes.'

'There is a nullah, and on the other side of the pakur tree the birds have alighted in the fields.'

'Is there water in the nullah?'

'A little, khodawund, and that flows down the centre; you may step over the stream, and the bed is all sand; further down there is a big pool, but near the pakur tree it is dry.'

'Nothing could be better; now come along, Ernest. You may take the first shot, for your loose charge will not carry so far as my cartridges, and I will pick out my birds as they rise.'

[1] *Anthropoides virgo.* [2] *Grus cinerea.*

Ten minutes afterwards they found themselves under the pakur tree, and well sheltered by the jamoon bushes. The cranes numbered about twenty, and certainly deserved the praise bestowed on them by Fordham. Of a most graceful shape, the general plumage a fine purplish grey, with black head and neck, and pendent plumes on the breast, brilliant carmine irides, with a tuft of white plumes extending backwards from the corner of the eye, and falling over the back of the head. The wing coverts are also very long and drooping. These cranes have a singular practice of attitudinizing, or dancing as some people call it, and Fordham, being anxious to watch their habits, as they were quite hidden from the birds, whispered to Milford to wait a little. It was certainly amusing. Two or three would step forward and bob and curtsey to each other in a most absurd way, now and then giving little springs in the air, holding out their wings. Others would look on gravely and then take their turn. Suddenly, one who was evidently on the look-out, gave a cry of alarm, and they all took to flight at once. Whatever feelings of compunction may have entered the breasts of the two men who were there watching them, their sudden flight caused a revulsion, for they left three of their number on the ground as they hastened from the fatal spot. The cause for their alarm was the approach of the elephant Bussunta. The mahout, having deposited her howdah in camp, had come out for forage, and unconsciously trespassed on his master's hiding-place.

Next morning they left Simuria for a village in the Chindwarra district, called Sāākh, where they had news of a tiger. At a place called Ounriah they heard of some wonderful bear caves, so, taking a villager as a guide, they started; but the result was their getting hopelessly lost

in the jungle, and the final confession of the wretched man that he knew nothing about the place. So they turned back disgusted in the direction of Sāākh, picking up *en route* two spotted deer, a stag with good horns, and a hind, which latter was shot by Milford in mistake for a stag, at which he was somewhat annoyed, though she turned out prime venison, which afterwards consoled him.

At Sāākh they found breakfast ready, after which they proceeded to the spot where the tiger had killed a mare and foal. They then walked along a nullah, where, sunning itself on some rocks, they saw another of those hideous iguanas like the one at Kohurgurh. On they went, cautiously following up the track, when they suddenly came upon a spotted deer lying dead, which turned out to be one which Milford had fired at that morning; the poor thing had but lately dropped, for it was still supple and warm. Detailing a couple of Gonds to carry it home, they went on, patiently tracking up the foot-prints in the sand. About half a mile further, as they turned into a small side nullah, the elephant threw up her trunk with a snort, and bang went Fordham's rifle.

It was the tiger, but as he bounded up the bank side he was too much covered by bushes, and for once the usually deadly weapon failed. There was nothing for it but to beat on for a time, which they did without success along the banks of the Pench, and at last turned to go home again. Fordham sat down and laid his rifle in its rest, and was opening a bottle of soda-water, when up jumped the object of their search from under a bush and bolted before a shot could be fired at him.

Away they went after him, the elephant straining every nerve, crashing through brushwood that kept switching their faces at every turn; down nullah—up

bank; not a hair of his hide to be seen. Rattle! crash! bump! thump! up goes a pea-fowl ahead, wildly screaming. 'He must be there; chello, Akbar Ali—chello!'.

Milford's eye lighted on what he thought was a dead branch of an aonla tree, with its long branchlets hanging down; the dark shadows between the yellow leaves do give one at times a sudden shock as if the eye had lighted on the striped hide it sought for; but in this case it was the reverse. Milford stared twice at the tiger itself, who was standing broadside on, looking at them, without knowing what he was about, and it flashed on him when too late. The elephant had too much way on, and before he could get an aim a tree intervened; but as they turned they saw him jump into a nullah. It was but a bit of a ditch, which the water had worn through the out-cropping rock, which lay in huge slabs around. The elephant stood on one of these slabs, and every now and then struck her trunk on it and blew out her breath, a sign of the tiger's presence which the natives call 'bhopara marna,' but not a vestige of the tiger was there. The bed of the nullah was smooth dry sand, which bore the imprints of his huge paws as he bounded in, but there was no trace of his having gone further, and as the opposite side of the nullah was a gentle sloping ascent, free from cover, it was impossible for him to have sprung over and taken that line of country without being full in view of his pursuers.

Altogether it was most mysterious; along the sandy bed of the ravine the footprints of pea-fowl and of a small cat or fox were clearly defined, and therefore the impress of the paw of so heavy an animal as a tiger could not have escaped notice.

'He has dodged us in some way, Ernest,' said Fordham, 'but we will go over to the other side and examine the place. Here, Akbar Ali, take the elephant round.'

The mahout had barely touched Bussunta to turn her when a yellow object darted as it were from under her feet; it was the tiger. But, quick as he was, Fordham's steady hand and eye drove two bullets through his broad back, and he rolled back gasping in the sand; a right and left from Milford finished him, and a very handsome tiger he was—a young male with beautiful stripes.

But Fordham looked at him rather with contempt.

'He was a regular sneak, that fellow,' he remarked; 'nothing but run from the first; and fancy his dodge of getting under that slab and hiding whilst we were consulting about him.'

'I suppose when the elephant turned, the movement shook the rock and frightened him,' said Milford, peering under the ledge. 'Why, there is barely room to hide a leopard, and how did he get his fat sides in?'

'It is wonderful,' rejoined his companion, 'to see what small and unlikely places tigers will squeeze themselves into, and how small a cover will completely hide one. Some time ago, out shooting on foot, I marked a tiger into a nullah, and as I was walking along to post myself in a good position, I noticed a little beyr bush at the end of a small watercourse leading into the ravine. There was not another cover for yards round, and behind this I wanted to post myself, feeling sure he would break out here; but old Sheykha, who was with me, was of a different opinion, and standing by the bush we argued the point, and I gave in. Hardly had we turned our backs, when the brute rushed out from under this very bush! I wonder we had not smelt him; it was the only time I have ever seen old Sheykha look dismayed, and I shall not forget his face on that occasion.'[1]

[1] See Notes.

'What a very near shave! did you get the tiger?'

'Some time after with the elephant, and a dangerous customer he proved; the most savage tiger I had seen.'

By this time some of the Gonds had come up, and arrangements were made for carrying the tiger into camp.

The next day being Sunday nothing was done. So the day passed quietly, and in the cool of the evening they took a walk, and in the course of it came across a party of Gonds who had strings of fish in their hands, and they were all evidently in high spirits at their day's work.

'Have they been netting?' asked Milford.

'No,' replied his companion; 'I suspect the poaching rascals have been poisoning a pool; they do it with various plants, or with a fruit called *aka*, which they pound up with flour and throw into the water, when the fish get quite intoxicated, and float on the surface to be knocked on the head.

'But are not such fish unwholesome to eat?'

'They say not, but, as far as I am concerned, I would rather not try them.'

'I hope they do not try such tricks with the Pench, otherwise our anticipated mahseer fishing at Machagora may turn out a failure.'

'No, I don't think I ever saw them try it in the big rivers; it is only in stagnant pools and tanks that they practise such barbarities, and I am afraid that millions of fish are annually destroyed in India in this way; and when one takes into consideration the thousand ways in which the immature fry are destroyed, it is really marvellous that there are any fish at all. There is nothing like a check on the destruction, and you will see in every market baskets full of small fry which, if left alone for a few

months, would have been worth as food a hundred times as much. But the natives have no notion of looking beyond the present day, and every conceivable kind of trap, fine net, and poison is put into operation, to the ruination of the rivers and jheels, which with proper conservation should afford an almost inexhaustible supply of food in this way.'

'I wonder the question is not taken up by Government,' said Milford, 'as it is in England, and the breeding of fish encouraged.'

'Government might do a great deal which it does not, and I dare say it will do so some day, but there are many things to contend against in this country with reference to the breeding of fish which are not met with in Europe. For instance, most of our rivers swarm with alligators, and the immense quantity of fish these brutes must destroy is beyond calculation, especially with the ghurrial, or fish-eating crocodile, of the Ganges.'

'That's the long, slender-snouted alligator, is it not?'

'Yes, the snub-nosed one, or *muggur* as the natives call it, is the common and most dangerous one; the other, though it grows to a greater size, lives exclusively on fish. The jaws of the two are vastly different, and show their habits at a glance—the one being attenuated, and armed with small flat, sharp-edged teeth, set like those of a saw; the other more massive and blunt, with round, conical pegs fitting into corresponding holes above and below.'

Their walk over, the two friends sat down to dinner, and then went early to bed, intending to start betimes next morning to Paladown, *en route* to Machagora.

When the next morning broke, the day looked far from promising; heavy banks of grey cloud foretold rain; still, as there was nothing but a threatening, they decided

on marching. The tents were being struck, and the camp was all in a bustle, when old Sheykha, followed by a couple of villagers, made his appearance, and reported that a *burra bharee shēr*—a very heavy tiger—had killed two plough-bullocks at the village of Noni, on the banks of the Pench, and that he had eaten one up entirely.

'Then he is certain to be so gorged that he will not be far from the carcass, and ought to show fight,' said Fordham.

'He is in the scrub jungle on the banks of the river, khodawund,' replied the old shikaree; 'I tracked him in myself. Khoob burra bāgh hi—his paws are so big,' he continued, doubling his fingers under his hands, and putting his flattened fists side by side.

Tea and toast being hurriedly despatched, the two friends on horseback, accompanied by old Sheykha and the attendant peons, were soon on the way to Noni. The Gonds had been told to run on ahead, and turn out the villagers to beat along the river bank.

The rain which had hitherto threatened now began to fall in earnest; clouds gathered in masses on the horizon, and the distant thunder rumbled; all bespoke a wet day. The horses hung their heads as they plodded along the footpath, and the only one who seemed to enjoy the turn affairs had taken was Bussunta, who strode along, flapping her huge ears and whisking off the flies that annoyed her sides with a feathery branch of the aonla, which she held in her flexible trunk. With her large howdah, she looked like one of the towered elephants that swelled the armies of Tamerlane.

Two or three deafening crashes of thunder brought down a perfect sheet of water, and then, the shower over, the curtain of cloud swept away, and the sun came out in all his oriental fierceness.

'A precious hot day it's going to be,' remarked Milford.

'All the better, my boy, for our work,' replied his friend; 'if it is a hot day, that tiger is ours after such a heavy meal as he is reported to have made. See, we are nearing the village, and all have turned out to see the fun.'

They had to pass through the main street, and were met at the entrance by the malgoozar, a fine-looking old Brahmin, with his elders around him; the rest of the villagers were all grouped together with horns and drums, ready to beat along the bank. All the women and children in the place seemed to have turned out to look at the sahibs and their elephant; and conspicuous amongst them for her beauty was the malgoozar's daughter, a girl of about sixteen, wonderfully fair, and with a perfect Grecian face. Milford in looking at her forgot for a while the tiger, which had hitherto engrossed his thoughts. However, he had not much time given him for admiration, for Fordham ordered the mahout to bring up the elephant. Touching her forehead, she bent down her head, and advanced the tip of her trunk; placing his foot on this, and laying hold of her ears, he ordered her to lift, and with a slow and graceful motion she raised him to a level with the howdah. But to take up Milford she had to kneel down, for lifting was a favour she would only accord to her master and to Akbar Ali, the mahout.

The horses were left in the village, and instructions were given to the beaters to begin about half a mile lower down, and beat along the river bank past the village, and on some little distance to a spot where the elephant would be posted; and away went each party to their respective stations.

The place where the two sportsmen took their stand

was a little break in the jungle on the river bank; here the turf sloped down to the water, and it would be impossible for the tiger to come along without exposing himself. On their right was a gentle eminence, which was crowned by a group of villagers—women and children—whose curiosity had led them to brave the danger of a sudden charge or a stray bullet. On the left was the river, with open, undulating country beyond.

All trace of the late thunder-storm was over, and nature, freshened up by the shower, looked all the lovelier in the bright sunlight; but the heat was trying—a damp, steamy heat. Now and then, however, a cool breeze came in fitful gusts over the placid surface of the waters, and bore to the ears of the hunters the distant noise of the beaters, with their uncouth instruments of music. It reminded Milford of the passage in Longfellow's 'Sunrise on the Hill,' where he says,

> The wild horn whose voice the woodland fills,
> Was ringing to the merry shout
> That faint and far the glen sent out,
> Where, answering to the sudden shot, thin smoke,
> Through thick-leaved branches, from the dingle broke.

It would probably be long ere the tiger came out, for the beaters were yet far distant, and as he remembered the pretty girl just seen, his thoughts went back to a prettier English maiden at home, and he wondered what she was doing whilst he was watching for a bloodthirsty tiger on the banks of the Pench. The elephant here gave a sign, which was not lost on Fordham.

'Ernest, my boy, be on the look-out; the elephant scents something.'

'It can't be the tiger, surely,' replied the young man. 'Why, the beaters have hardly begun yet.'

'I don't know; it may be, for the elephant is evidently suspicious. Aha! you brute!' exclaimed the speaker, pitching forward his rifle and firing rapidly.

The elephant had struck her trunk violently on the ground and lifted it out of the way, when, with a savage grunt, the tiger, without the least warning, sprang out at her from behind the nearest bush. The two bullets knocked him down, but picking himself up he dashed into cover again, followed by a couple more shots from Milford. At this moment old Sheykha appeared with his long Afghan knife drawn, and deliberately he stalked into the cover after the tiger. Both Fordham and Milford shouted to him to keep out; but the old fellow, wishing to sustain his character in the sight of the assembled villagers, marched straight into the bushes.

'Did you ever see such an obstinate old wretched idiot?' exclaimed Fordham, stamping his foot, and for once losing his patience. 'Here, after him quick, Akbar Ali, or the tiger may get hold of the old man.'

As the elephant moved forward the old shikaree reappeared, and with a quiet, composed manner, as if he had been after a deer, remarked,

'You have wounded him, sahib. Look,' continued he, holding up a bunch of leaves, 'these are covered with blood.' Letting the elephant smell them he flung them down, and Fordham, giving him a few severe words of reproof, proceeded to reload, after which they entered the cover, and began to beat about cautiously. There was a large bushy creeper covering an old tree, and this being in the way, the elephant was ordered to knock it down, which she did, and as it fell with a crash the tiger came gallantly up to the charge again, taking the old lady rather at a disadvantage, as her head was buried in the green stuff.

However, he was sent back roaring and rolling over, disgorging in his agony great lumps of the meat he had swallowed.

Stopping a moment to reload, they went after him again. Once more did he come up, so savagely as to make Bussunta recoil a couple of paces, to the great discomfort of Milford, who was in the back seat of the howdah, and who was, by such retrogression, forced into a very prickly tree, and his shots were in consequence spoilt. However, he got a turn very soon, for, on following up the now badly wounded tiger, his eye suddenly fell on him standing broadside on in the shade of a bush, looking very sick and surly. He took a steady aim at his loins, and fired with effect, Fordham at the same time giving him another barrel.

'Stand by for charge the fourth! Ah, no! gallant brute, your day is over.' He sprang up with a roar, but in the midst of the effort his strength failed him, and he rolled down the bank. Down went the elephant after him; ha! there was another gape, life was still in him. Fordham's heavy rifle went up to his shoulder, and as the smoke cleared away the brawny limbs were quivering in death.

'Salaam kurro! Bussunt Piaree! salaam! daughter of elephants, my brave one!' shouted the mahout. With one foot on the dead tiger the proud creature brushed her trunk over his body, and triumphantly waved it to her forehead.

'Well, this is a brave beast,' said Milford, as he looked with admiration at the immense muscular power exhibited by the dead animal.

'Yes,' rejoined the other, 'he is one of the regular fighting caste, game to the backbone. But I cannot understand his charging us without provocation; it is

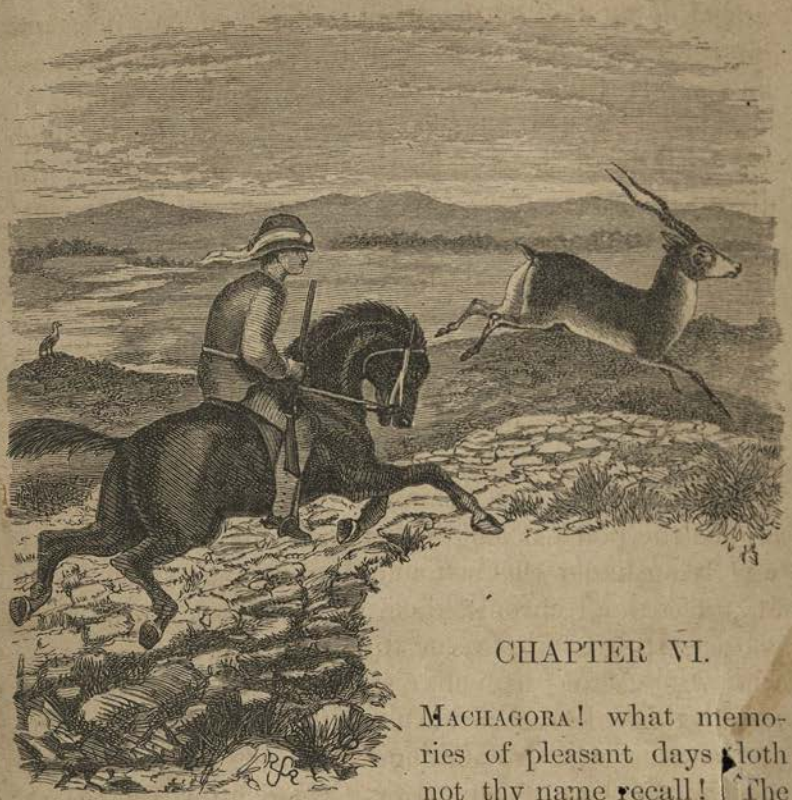
very seldom a tiger goes out of his way to attack an elephant, and there must be a reason for it; his natural bravery, and his gorged condition, which would not allow of his running far on a hot day like this, readily account for his repeated charges, but that he should have assumed the offensive from the first is an uncommon incident. Old Sheykha may be able to throw some light on it.'

Sheykha, after hearing the story of the attack, at once explained it.

'Why, khodawund,' said he, 'is not this the tiger that pulled down a sahib's elephant two or three years ago? Ask the villagers, and they will all tell you how he got her at a disadvantage on a slope, and pulled her on her side, and all escaped with difficulty; and he thought he had only to rush at your honour's and pull yours down too. But Allah has the ruling of all events, and what was written in his fate has come to pass to-day.'

So they went home and divided the spoil. Fordham took the skin, and Milford chose the skull, which was enormous, though exhibiting marks of age, the tusks being much worn. Altogether they were well satisfied with the day's work, and long bore in mind, with pleasure, the morning at Noni, on the banks of the Pench, with the fighting tiger.

SKULL OF MUGGUR.



CHAPTER VI.

MACHAGORA! what memories of pleasant days doth not thy name recall! The last time we visited thy pleasant waters was fifteen years ago, when laid up in the station, sick and ill at ease; the doctor declared to us that any change was better than no change, and, though it was the month of May, he advised us to take to camp again, and Machagora was the place we pitched upon. We went out in a palkee, being too weak to ride; and ten days after we were hunting tigers on foot along the banks of the Pench, in the thick jamoon covers of Paladown. As we turn over the white-ant-eaten, yellow, and mildewed journals of those days, the old familiar names call up visions of the Semul-valla bhugra, the Raja Deebur, and the jamoon-covered

island in the bed of the river, where, on one occasion, we turned out two tigers and lost them both in the confusion. A little further on was a tree from which we watched a tiger attack a pony, and get kicked off, though the poor little hero fell a victim to the rush of the tigress, for there were two. We avenged his fate, and in doing so nearly broke our own collar-bone in following the advice of old Sheykha, which was to pull both barrels at her at once. How she crept away to die, and we tracked her into the gloomy ravine of the Raja Deebur and lost her, and how we heard of her remains being afterwards found; how, in following up her mate the next day, we debated with old Sheykha in favour of taking up a position behind a certain beyr bush, and argued the point at length, little dreaming that the tiger was lying under that selfsame bush within three yards of us, are all chronicled in those yellow, worm-eaten pages. It was a pleasant time, as a brother of ours, who was visiting us, will testify, and who has a lively recollection of one incident of the trip, an onslaught of tree-ants, who drove us ignominiously from our position to the loss of our tiger. Some little distance to the north of the fishing place was a very fine old banyan tree, and under this Fordham's tents had been pitched, for the weather was now warm, and dense shade was grateful. The hot winds were blowing, though on these plateaux they are not so bad as they are below the ghats; still they rendered the use of *tatties*, or wet mats of a sweet-scented grass root called *khus khus*,[1] almost necessary, and with these at the doors of the tents on the windy side, the temperature could be considerably reduced. Of course they had to be kept

[1] *Andropogon muriaticum.*

wet, and for this purpose a man was deputed to pour water over them at intervals; and immediately in front of them, inside the tent, were ranged bottles of water and lemonade to cool; ice machines were not known in those days in the jungles, and the most primitive methods of cooling were practised. In the hot season, when the air is exceedingly dry, it answered admirably to put bottles, well wrapped in cloths or straw saturated with water, into a kind of swing which was kept going for half an hour or so backwards and forwards, the rapid passage through the air inducing brisk evaporation, which cooled the liquor effectually; but this plan quite fails when there is a damp atmosphere. Now-a-days the use of ice machines is so common, that the old-fashioned makeshifts are almost forgotten.

Very pleasant did the sight of the comfortable tents, standing in the deep shade of the banyan tree, appear to the dusty and heated Englishmen, as they rode in from Paladown; and refreshing indeed, after the glare of the sun, was the gloom of the overhanging boughs, whose leafy recesses rang with the notes of merry birds and the chirrup of squirrels; from the river close by came the soothing sound of rippling waters, as they flowed over a shallow, rocky bed.

Easy chairs and a camp-table, covered with tea and toast and fruit, were placed outside the tent door; and, as Milford threw himself off his horse and into one of the chairs, he stretched out his legs and closed his eyes, with a sigh of intense satisfaction.

'Well, you seem to be comfortable, Ernest,' said his comrade, laughing.

'So I am,' replied the other, with his eyes still shut. 'I could go to sleep at once; here are the songs of birds, and the murmuring of waters, and the sighing of the

breeze in the green leaves; all nature tickling one's senses into repose.'

'Yes, and, worthy poet, here is your tea getting cold, and the hot chuppatties cooling into leather.'

'And my worthy friend and mentor eating more than his share; *basta, basta*, as we say *in Italiano*.'

'Ah! that has roused my young friend from his dreams of Parnassus, has it? Here, drink from the streams of teapottus, and eat of the food that the Olympian tables provide.'

'Diana might take to a chuppattie with hunters' sauce, but I am afraid the stately Juno would turn up her nose at the leathery morsel, and as for Hebe with a teapot, one might as well have Bacchus with a pipe and a pint pewter. However, I must say Chand Khan's chuppatties are not bad, and the way in which he turns out such good butter by shaking milk in an old tart-fruit bottle is a marvel, and a triumph of patience and perseverance.'

'Have you got your tackle in order, Ernest?' asked Fordham, after a pause.

'I think so,' was the reply; 'I have not looked at my rods since I left England, but there they are in a case, and there is a book full of salmon flies, and if any duns or midges are required for small fry, I can make those up in a minute.'

'You must not think you are going to do fly fishing here,' said Fordham. 'I am afraid the streams are not rapid enough, and fish grow sluggish in pools; but still try it by all means. I intend to do so myself; the general way is to ground-bait for some days, and then fish with dough and cotton wool beaten up together, or with parched gram, through which fine holes have been drilled to allow of the hook to be passed through; but I

find the smaller fish, from three to ten pounds, are livelier, and will rise to a fly at times, and I think they give far better sport than the monsters that you sometimes hook with paste. They almost invariably sulk, and go down to the bottom like stones, and are very difficult to manage.'

'Up to what size does a mahseer run?' asked Milford.

'It is very difficult to say; I have heard of enormous fish, especially in the Punjab and the rivers of the Doon near Mussoorie, but I am afraid to quote from memory lest I should exaggerate. I have seen them over sixty pounds here, and in other parts of India I have heard of them as being over a hundred pounds. But as far as my experience goes the fish from fifteen to twenty-five pounds give the best sport.'

'Do they leap out of water like the salmon?'

'Well, my acquaintance with salmon is extremely limited, but the tactics of the mahseer are, I think, different. They never leap clear out of water, but they make tremendous rushes, which require an unusually large reel, and plenty of line, and occasionally a good run after them over trying ground. I should think the best of mahseer fishing is inferior to salmon, but I know too little to be able to give a correct opinion, and I have heard many people very enthusiastic about mahseer fishing in the Doon.'

'The mahseer does not belong to the salmon family, does it? I confess I am grossly ignorant concerning fishes. I know a trout from a grayling, and those again from a flounder, but to what families they belong is beyond me.'

'Well, I can tell you so much, that the mahseer is nothing like a salmon. Here, give me a pencil, and I will draw you a sketch of the two. The salmon you

know well; the mahseer, you see, is a leather-mouthed fish, more like a carp, of which family indeed it is a member, belonging to the subgenus of the barbels, and is the *Barbus tor* of naturalists; and though he lacks the thorough-bred look of the salmon, still he is a very gamey fish, and worthy of a fisherman's rod.'

After breakfast the two friends set to work overhauling their tackle, Fordham having no office work in consequence of a native festival, on which occasions legal work generally comes to a standstill, the native of India thinking quite as much of his *festa* as does an Italian in fair Florence. So they rummaged out old pocket-books full of hooks and feathers, and turned out their rods and reels, and discussed much the weighty question of what were likely to be killing flies. Fordham recommended the brightest yellow and red—creatures utterly unknown to entomologists, and which he laughingly declared the mahseer took to be dragon flies; and, having made his selection, he sat down, and with nimble fingers began to busk some tiny hooks with black ostrich.

'What are you going to do with those black gnats?' asked Milford.

'Why,' said the other, smiling, 'when my arm aches with landing giant mahseer, I am going to descend from the sublime to the ridiculous and fish for chilwas.'

'What, those little sprats that they cook on skewers?'

'The very same,' answered Fordham; 'they are great favourites of mine, for they rise at a fly like a trout, and with a fine horsehair and a few midges I think they are great fun, as well as good eating, if you get a sufficient quantity. I was once quartered with my regiment at a place where there was no amusement at all hardly, except fishing in a large tank for these little fellows; there was an English regiment at the same station, and it was amusing

to see how keen some of the officers, who used to talk of their salmon-fishing exploits, were after these little mites.'

The day wore away, and in the evening the two friends went off to look at the fishing ground, one corner of which had been baited by a fisherman of the place in accordance with the usual custom. Milford took his shot gun, and Fordham had 'Plugger,' as something in the shape of a black buck or chikara might be picked up.

The fishing ground at Machagora was a long reach of calm, deep water, between high precipitous rocks, and during the hot weather the mahseer collected in this pool. As the Englishmen descended the bank a huge panther, which had been lapping the water on the other side, bounded up the rocks at their approach.

Fordham's quick eye was, however, too rapid for his escape, and ere he had got half way up the rocks the deadly barrel had covered him, and, struck through the spine, he rolled down and fell heavily into the stream. The next minute he was swimming across straight for them. Fordham quietly reloaded and waited.

'It won't do to let him land, Ernest,' said he, 'as you have only shot in your gun, and these panthers are savage brutes when bent on mischief; so here goes for a settler.'

The animal was evidently swimming with difficulty, having little or no use of his hind legs, but he bore gallantly on, looking the picture of determined ferocity, and his eyes glared at Fordham's as they met. However, the issue was speedily decided, for as soon as the fine sight was brought to bear on the panther's forehead, a bullet crashed through his brain, and with a bubbling growl he rolled over and sank, and rose again a little lower, to sink once more.

'He'll stick at the shallows lower down,' said Ford-

ham, 'and we shall get the body if we send down some men to watch for it. I don't think the alligators will touch him. Nusseer Khan, see that some men are sent down to look for him at the bottom of the reach.'

'Very well, my lord.'

'I say, Ernest,' continued Fordham, pointing to some chilwas frisking out of the waters in the last glowing of the setting sun, 'look at those little beauties; if I had a rod and a few of those flies here, we would have a couple of dozen for dinner—they are such merry little imps.'

'Yes, I must say they are pretty, but I long to have one of those big fellows on my line. Ah, there! one like that monster. I'm sure he was a forty-pounder!' he exclaimed, as a large fish rose at an evening moth, and left circles that widened and widened till they rippled on the bank.

'All right, my boy, wait till to-morrow; but now we must be making tracks for home before it gets dark.'

As they walked back to their tents they were interested in observing the flight of a number of flying-foxes (*Pteropus Edwardsii*), which came from the eastward and steadily held on a south-west course. They advanced with a slowish flight in a countless stream, and were lost to sight over the western horizon.

'There must be a biggish colony where all those come from,' said Milford; 'that is to say, if they all come from one place.'

'I see no reason to doubt it,' replied Fordham; 'I have seen enormous collections of them in groves of tamarind trees to the north of Seonee, and they seem to go great distances for food. I should not wonder if these fellows are bound for the mango trees below the ghats, where the fruit ripens sooner than it does on the higher lands. I once saw one caught at sea on board a

steamer at least a hundred miles from land; the poor beast seemed exhausted and hungry, and devoured greedily the plantains we gave him.'

'They subsist entirely on fruit, do they not?

'It is supposed so, and certainly as far as my experience goes they do. I know my guava trees in Seonee suffer greatly by their nightly depredations, there being a colony of them just at the southern entrance of Munglipeyt; at the same time their dentition is decidedly carnivorous, and with their formidable teeth they can give severe bites, as a dog of mine who attempted to seize one knows to his cost. They are said to be good eating, and as they are clean feeders I have no doubt they are, but to me they have always been too repulsive in appearance to allow of the experiment.'

Here Nusseer Khan whispered to Milford.

'Will your honour shoot me one of those *wurbagools*?'

'Why, what do you want a wurbagool for?'

'You see, my lord, I get rheumatic pains in my leg sometimes, and the bone of a wurbagool tied round the ankle with a string of a black cow's hair is, they say, the best cure.'

Milford picked out a fine big fellow and brought him down; the fall from a height on to the hard ground effectually extinguishing what spark of life may have remained. The head of the animal was very like that of a fox-terrier, the general colour brown, with long hair of an orange tint about the shoulders and chest, amongst which rapidly darted a curious little parasite or tick, something like a horny little spider in appearance. His wings covered an expanse of four and a half feet. Nusseer Khan secured his prize, and the trio proceeded.

As they neared the camp a most beautiful meteor

sailed slowly down from the starry sky, like a ball of fire, which divided and fell in a fiery stream. All looked at it with silent astonishment for a few seconds, then Fordham laughingly said to Nusseer Khan—

'One of the angels has dropped his lamp—eh, Nusseer Khan?'

'It must be so, my lord—who knows?'

Seeing Milford somewhat puzzled at the remarks, Fordham explained that the Mahomedans have an idea that the stars are the lamps of the angels guarding the gates of heaven, and that a shooting star is a lamp carelessly dropped.

'The idea is pretty,' rejoined Milford, 'but surely they are not so ignorant in these days as to believe it?

'Why not? the lower classes in more civilised countries believe things quite as absurd. Of course the educated Mahomedans know better, but the illiterate ones believe any idle tale that a wandering fakeer puts into their heads. However, here we are in camp; now for dinner; my walk has made me hungry. Hi! Chand Khan! look alive! Khana lāo!'

Sunrise found our friends by the waterside; one of the presiding deities of the place, in the shape of a wizened little old dheemur, or fisherman, was in attendance with a basket of parched gram, and he looked with grave disapproval at the bright-coloured flies which Fordham was attaching to his line, all the while nervously kneading in his skinny hands a lump of cotton wool and flour paste.

'What are you going to try, Ernest?' said his companion.

'Well, I think for the sake of novelty I will try the

aboriginal method first. Here, thou dusky Isaac, bait my hook for me, and lead the way.'

The old dheemur grinned with pleasure. 'Aha! one of the sahibs was going to fish properly; he had seen lots of sahibs whisk bits of feathers all over the water, but what was the use? For one fish of ten seers they caught he would get half a score of double the weight in his way. There now,' said he, exhibiting with pride a bolus of paste on the big triple hook large enough to catch a shark, 'there, sahib, only big fishes can swallow that, and what's the good of catching little ones?' But he looked with great contempt at the fine gut and line—the sahibs were very funny people, and never went the right way to work.

He then proceeded to the water's edge, and taking a handful of grain showered it over the pool. In one instant the fish rose in dozens, almost tumbling over each other in their haste, fish of all sizes, from an ounce to several pounds in weight. Then came a sudden commotion, and a huge fellow rose, leaving quite a wave behind him.

'Now, sahib, now, sahib!' eagerly exclaimed the old man, 'throw in your bait, throw in your bait!'

Milford did so, and the next minute his line was running out with tremendous velocity; the paste had been gulped almost as soon as it touched the water. After taking out about forty yards, the fish stopped and plumped down to the bottom.

Fordham in the meantime had gone away from the baited ground to a place where the current was a little more rapid, and after a few throws he caught a four-pounder, a nice clean fish, though small, and, as he was using a light Irish trout rod, it gave him very fair play. He then got a two-pounder, then one of three and a

half, which he piloted along the rocks to where Milford was vainly trying to move his sulking leviathan, and landed it there.

'What am I to do with this brute, Fordham?' asked Milford, with a puzzled expression; 'he won't stir, and my line won't stand a heavy strain.'

'Wait a bit,' replied the other, 'I'll start him.'

So saying he dived into his shooting wallet for a conical bullet and a bit of fine wire. Round the top of the bullet he cut a groove and twisted the wire round it; then, taking a turn of the wire round Milford's fishing line, he made a loose ring.

'Now then, Ernest, hold taut your line; that's right. Now we'll slide this down, and if it hits him on the nose it will make him jump.'

Splash went the bullet down, down, till it fulfilled its mission, when off went the mahseer again at full speed, this time taking Ernest along the rocks as fast as he could scramble over them. At last down he went again, and the young man, losing patience, broke his line and lost his fish. He then devoted his attention to the smaller ones, and got a two and a half pounder and a one and a quarter pounder, and Fordham got another two-pounder. A big fellow now rose near the latter, who cast neatly over him. Flop, whir-r-r-r! away he flew up stream, darting along like a steam-engine, bending Fordham's light rod almost double, and he had nearly sixty yards of line out before he was turned.

Now came the ticklish part; fearing he might get in amongst the rocks and break the gut, as did Milford's fish, Fordham handled him with the greatest care, skilfully leading him round the rocks to a place where there was a little basin, into which he with some difficulty piloted him; here, after half an hour's darting and diving, he

got fairly exhausted, and, resigning himself to his fate, turned broadside up, and glided into the landing net. He was a beautiful, clean, active fish of twenty-six pounds. Milford got one of thirteen and a half, which somewhat consoled him for the loss of the big one, but on the whole he was not well satisfied with his morning's work, and indefatigably whipped the water; whilst Fordham, changing to his chilwa tackle, had soon a basketful of these little beauties.[1] Milford at last got another monster, which sulked precisely in the same way as the first, but his captor was determined to be patient and tire him out, so he announced his intention of staying out all day rather than give in to him, and asked Fordham to send him out a camp stool, an umbrella, and some breakfast.

We need not record the details of this eventful day, save that they consisted chiefly of violent rushes and alternate fits of the sulks; suffice it to say that at three o'clock in the afternoon Milford returned triumphant with a fish weighing sixty-five pounds; though, as far as genuine sport was concerned, Fordham had by far the best of it.

The body of the panther had been recovered from the shallows, and with an uninjured skin, which had been taken off and was pegged out to dry when Milford returned in the afternoon.

Next day they marched back into their own district, and camped along the valley of the Bān Gunga, halting at Bāākee for a day's black-buck[2] shooting.

Antelopes abound all along this valley, and do much damage to the crops. They are the greatest pests the villager, in this part of the district, has to contend against. In the well-cultivated plain between Seonee and the borders of the Chindwarra district there is no

[1] *Aspidoparia morar.* [2] *Antilope bezoartica.*

cover for sambur, nylgaie, and wild pigs, but their place is filled by the antelope, which, in herds of from a dozen to fifty, roam the country and destroy the tender crops. Wary and difficult of access as is this graceful animal, it knows full well the harmless nature of the villager, and allows him and his bullocks to approach to within a few yards; driven from one corner of a field it quietly trots to another, and begins to graze, regardless of shouts, and only a vigorous onslaught with stones has any effect. But it instinctively knows a gun and a shikaree, and makes off at once. Its speed is well-known, and there is no chance of either horse or ordinary dog overtaking it unless it be wounded.

It gets attached to certain localities, and when it is driven away, and even wounded, it may be found next day in the favourite haunt again. This is in some measure a good thing, for a wounded antelope can generally be recovered, whereas another animal would go clean away, and be lost, to die perhaps by inches. To our way of thinking this is a great point, for nothing weighed so heavily on our mind as a wounded animal escaping. If aught is to be killed for food or otherwise, let it be done as speedily as possible, and the man who wounds, and from laziness neglects to follow up to the best of his ability, deserves to be wounded himself. We have spent two whole days in searching for a wounded buck, and have killed him at last on the ground where he was first found.

Fordham gave Milford an instance of this as they were riding along the plain between Runbeylee and Bāākee.

'I was out,' said he, 'on one occasion, on the boundary between Khapa and Belgaon, and came across a particularly fine old buck, with very wide-spreading

horns; so peculiar were they that I could have sworn to the head amongst a thousand. He was too far for a safe shot when I first saw him, but I could not resist the chance of a snap at him, and tried it, but missed, and I left the place. My work led me again soon after to Belgaon itself, and whilst I was in camp there I found my friend again, but he was very wary; for three days I hunted him about, but could not get a shot. At last I got my chance; it was on the morning of the day I left Belgaon. I rode round by the boundary, when up jumped my friend from a bed of rushes, and took off across country. I followed him cautiously and found him again with some does about two miles off. A man was ploughing in a field close by; so, hailing him, I got his bullocks and drove them carefully up past the does. We splashed through a nullah, and waded through a lot of rushes, and at last I found myself behind a clump of coarse grass, with a nullah between me and the antelope. They jumped up on my approach, and Blacky, seeing his enemy, made a speedy bolt of it; but I was within easy range of him, and a bullet brought him down on his head with a complete somersault. Now this buck, in spite of the previous shot at him, and being hunted about from day to day, never left his ground, and used to sleep every night in a field near my tent.'

'A well-trained bullock is a great assistance, is it not?' asked Milford.

'Certainly,' replied his companion, 'but a horse is nearly as good; I have often stalked them by allowing my horse to graze quietly towards them, carefully hiding myself behind him all the while; but they are so accustomed to the villagers and their plough bullocks, that the best way is to throw a sheet about you, and drive a bullock steadily backwards and forwards till you get

near enough to shoot; in fact this is the only way of getting at them on plains, like parts of these, where all is a dead level, without even a bush or two to help the stalker; he then has to pit his cunning against the natural acuteness of the animal.[1] Look, here is a case in point; see yonder herd, with those two fine bucks tilting at each other a little distance off. Now how are we to get them? If we attempt to get nearer the does will set off at a walk, then a canter, and finally begin to bound, and the bucks will follow in their wake. We must have them driven, and the Lalla is the man to manage it; here, edge away from them so as to lead them to think we are going away. We must get off and walk by our horses, and, when we reach yon slip of stony ground with the stunted bushes, we must drop behind them and let the horses go on. Here, Moula, you must manage to drive the herd down past this stony bit.'

'All right, sahib,' was the ready answer, 'I'll do it.'

'He seems very confident about it,' observed Milford.

'He will manage it, I have no doubt; now when I call out "drop" single out a bush, Ernest, and lie behind it, letting your horse go on with the syce. Moula will do all the rest. Now then, my boy—drop!'

Down they went, both of them, flat on their faces behind the low scrub, whilst the horses held on their way.

The antelopes still regarded them, but less intently than before; some of the does had begun to graze again, and the young ones to frisk about. The two bucks still continued their tournament, never having from the first deigned to notice the intruders; but one or two of the elder does yet kept a watchful attitude.

Moula managed his party so as to work gradually

[1] See Notes.

round the herd, and yet at the same time he kept both horses and men turned away as much as possible from the antelope, so as to convey the idea that the distance was being lengthened between them. Taking a wide sweep, he gradually edged round and round, till he found himself opposite his master's hiding-place, with the herd between them; then he began to advance slowly and by long tacks, like a vessel beating to windward. All the does now became suspicious, and stood gazing at the interloper. Then even the two bucks stopped in their interminable struggle, and stared at the advancing party. At last the leading doe moved off, slowly at first, and then at a mild trot, followed by the rest, the bucks bringing up the rear and having an occasional dig at each other *en route*; having moved a couple of hundred yards further from the Lalla, and nearer to his master, the herd again halted and faced the advancing party—the bucks beginning their little game again. However, as the Lalla and the syces leading the horses steadily advanced, the old doe evidently thought it beyond a joke, and set off again at a run, and finally settled down to a stretching gallop, occasionally breaking into those wonderful bounds in which this animal excels; they tore past the hiding-place where the two hunters were lying in wait, and were allowed to pass unscathed, for were not the two bucks coming up behind—lazy fellows, not caring to exert themselves so much as the other skittish young things and timorous does?

'Now, Ernest, you take the fellow on the right.'

Crack went the rifle, and down dropped the buck, but picking himself up he went off at speed. The other buck on hearing the shot went off with a succession of bounds, but the third was about the last; for Fordham, springing to his feet, delivered his fire whilst yet he was in the air,

and, struck through the heart, the graceful creature fell stone-dead.

'You had better jump on your nag, and follow up your wounded buck, Ernest; I'll come after you quietly.'

The young man eagerly vaulted to his saddle, and, gun in hand, set off at a rattling pace, and for a time rapidly gained ground on the antelope; but when the latter perceived he was being pursued he went off at a speed which almost created a doubt in Milford's mind as to his being seriously wounded. However, he pressed his horse to the utmost, and soon perceived that the buck could not outstrip him, although the distance between them was not perceptibly diminished. At last the ground became more sterile, and strewn with round boulders, the size of a cocoa-nut, which made it rather awkward riding. A little further on the country became undulating, and beyond lay the river. Milford now hoped to cut off an angle, as he knew the river must turn the buck; between them lay a deep dell, very stony, at the bottom of which was a little rocky rivulet which led down to the Gunga. Down went the antelope, and down after him went his relentless pursuer, but when the horseman reached the top of the opposite bank the black buck had disappeared. Before him lay the river. He reined up on the brink and looked right and left, but not a trace of his quarry could he see. He hailed some men who were fishing, but they knew nothing and had seen nothing of the animal. Had it swum across they must have seen it. It seemed equally clear that had it run along the bank near the water's edge they must have noticed it. Altogether it was incomprehensible; it could not have dropped dead on the way, otherwise he would have ridden almost over it; anyhow it had escaped in some mysterious manner, much to Milford's disgust.

As his eye roamed over every inch of the ground in the hope of finding some trace, he suddenly noticed what appeared to be a couple of dry sticks projecting from the surface of the stream in a small bed of rushes, about three or four feet from the bank. He looked again attentively and then rode up; yes—there was was no mistake, here was the cunning beast after all, buried up to the nose in the water, with nothing but his nostrils and the tell-tale horns sticking out.

Milford could not help admiring the sagacity of the animal, which, unable to exercise its wonted speed, had thus taken to a stratagem which nearly succeeded, and his heart so relented that, had the buck been unwounded, he would have let him go scot-free; but he remembered that a speedy death would now be the most merciful thing; and so, bending over his horse's neck, he took a steady aim, and shot it through the head, and then called to the astonished fishermen to come and pull it out of the river.

In the meantime Fordham went on over a stony upland, looking out for the great bustard, which are sometimes to be found on these plains. The great bustard is one of the finest of the game birds of the plains of India. The male stands, when full grown, over four feet in height, and weighs from twenty-six to twenty-eight pounds.[1] The old males have the top of the head and crest black, the whole of the face and neck pure white, and the back and wings are of that beautiful buff or light brown plumage, streaked and mottled with fine wavy lines of black, which is well known to most sportsmen. They are chiefly insectivorous, though vegetable food is occasionally taken by them. One we winged, and after-

[1] Jerdon gives the wing extent of the *Eupodotis Edwardsii* as eight feet.

wards cured and tamed, lived chiefly on hard-boiled eggs. It had a peculiar bark, which it uttered frequently when alarmed, and especially at the sight of a tame mungoose, at which it used to get very irate. They kept up a smothered animosity for some time, and at last came to open warfare, in which of course the mungoose got the best of it; and to our sorrow the bustard died of his wounds, one of which was an ugly nip in the throat.

It differs from the European bustard, a smaller bird which is sometimes called the great bustard by writers, in having proportionately longer legs, and is less turkey-like in appearance and more majestic. In fact, the sight of a fine *tookdar*, as the natives call it, pompously stalking along the crest of some rocky knoll, such as those about Bāākee and Nundora, is one to send a thrill of pleasure through the heart of any sportsman, for, in addition to its being a mark worthy of his rifle, it is extremely wary, and, like its companion the antelope, calls forth all the cunning of the stalker. The flesh is very greatly overrated in our opinion, much as some people rave about it. A young bird or hen is palatable enough; but a young peacock fed on jugnee is better and more delicate. We have seen somewhere an elaborate recipe for cooking bustard, and, what with the ham and the champagne, and the mushroom ketchup, we should think an old crow would turn out almost as palatable; but we confess to extremely simple tastes, and prefer the natural juice of meat to its more piquant artificial substitutes. We all know the old proverb of who sends meat, and who sends cooks, and it is not far wide of the truth.

However, to return to our narrative. Fordham found his bustard, and he carried it home with him, but he did not get it without difficulty. He came upon it at first unawares, and it spread its broad wings for flight

before he was within a hundred yards; he watched it carefully with a pocket glass, and saw it light on a low ridge about half a mile away. The bird had a commanding position, and it was a serious question whether approach would be possible; however, as he neared the place he crossed a footpath leading from one village to another, and along it was jogging a peasant, with two huge bundles of grass attached to the ends of a slight pole which he carried on his shoulder.

Here was an idea! Fordham knew that both antelope and bustard were in the habit of seeing these men daily with their loads, and their ploughs and pack-bullocks, and consequently cared little for them; so, taking a light horse-cloth from one of the syces, he threw it around himself, and, after a short parley with the villager, the pole with its grassy burden was transferred to his own shoulder, and away he set in the direction of the bird, who, with outstretched neck, was still keeping guard on his eminence. The cautious sportsman did not, however, approach him directly, but by working obliquely round in such a way as to delude the bird into the belief that he was passing, whilst he was in reality narrowing the circle. At last he got within range, and dropping on one knee he laid down his bundle, and before the astonished bird could take to flight the fatal bullet laid him low.

On his way back in the direction of Bāākee, Fordham fell in with Milford, who told him of his run with the wounded buck, and also of another curious adventure he had afterwards. On reloading, after the scene on the river bank, he charged his gun, which happened to be a smooth-bore, with Eley's cartridge, in hopes of picking up bustard, he not caring to try them with the rifle as did his more skilful friend. On recrossing the rocky dell before mentioned, only at a point about half a mile higher up,

a buck antelope started up and stood staring for a minute, standing chest on, and presenting the minimum of a mark. The distance was not more than forty yards, and Milford, acting on the impulse of the moment, took aim at his white throat and fired. The buck dropped, and on examining him he found that the hole was no bigger than that of a bullet; whereupon he probed the wound and discovered the cartridge entire—wire case and all—inside the creature's throat; at that distance it had not spread in the least.

There was now meat enough and to spare in camp—three black bucks and a bustard—so they made their way back to Bāākee, intending next day to march to Bamanwarra, where there were reports of spotted deer.

The road to Bamanwarra lay over an overlying trap formation, in the undulations of which the decomposed basalt, mixed with vegetable refuse, formed a soil capable of bearing crops, but of which the arable qualities were considerably deteriorated by the admixture of boulders varying from the size of an orange to that of a man's head. The ridges between such fertile portions were sterile to a degree scarcely supporting the hardiest grasses. Here and there by the margins of nullahs grew a few stunted buteas, and their gradually increasing numbers towards Bamanwarra gave promise of a more wooded country, sheltering other game than the antelope of the plains; and so it proved, for as they neared the low hill over which they had to pass before reaching their camp, they descried a herd of about a dozen nylgaie feeding in a hollow. The ground was so far favourable for riding that there were no serious difficulties, being an undulating table-land, but the round boulders before mentioned were so thickly strewn over the place as to render it somewhat hazardous.

However, there was a glorious old bull, black as jet, in the herd, and he was worthy of the attempt, and again two villagers came up and begged very hard that the sahibs would kill him, and drive away the herd, for they had been there three days, and their crops had suffered.

Fordham was but ill-mounted for the chase, being on a punchy hill-pony of no great speed, so he left it to Milford, who was mounted on a light chestnut Cābulee, sure-footed and fast.

'Could we not wait for the other horses?' urged the young man; 'we are on the road they must come, and they cannot be far behind.'

'No, never mind waiting, or you may lose your chance, Ernest; go on and take that black fellow, and I will ride back and see if I can get Cossack in time enough to put on steam and overhaul you.'

So saying he left his comrade to ride down gently towards the herd, whilst he cantered back along the road. To his satisfaction he soon saw the string of horses coming towards him, his favourite leading. Cossack always had a peculiar bit, so his bridle was already on, and, as his horse-cloth was tightly strapped on with a broad surcingle, Fordham lost no time by changing his saddle, but, vaulting on his back, he was off after his companion, rifle in hand, riding like a Comanche Indian.

Milford proceeded down the slope at a slow pace towards the herd, which allowed him to come almost within shooting distance before they took alarm. On seeing the hinds trotting off he put spurs to his horse and dashed in between them and the bull, and separated him from his mates; at the same time he started from his cover, where he had been lying unperceived, a younger bull of slaty grey colour, and both the animals took off together across country. As he gathered up his reins

and sent his horse after them, he heard an encouraging shout behind, and up came Fordham, thundering along on Cossack.

'Take the black, and leave the grey to me, Ernest,' he shouted, as he passed at full speed after the younger and fleeter animal.

The ground was simply vile, a mass of rolling stones, and, on looking over it afterwards, Milford was astonished how they got over it without a fall. The blue bull clattered over it like a cart-horse, and Milford knew that unless he could press him hard enough to blow him, he had little chance of coming up. The rocky ground that so impeded his horse, and made him stumble and slide at times in a most break-neck way, seemed not to offer the like impediment to the bull, who held gallantly on his way, without showing as yet any signs of distress. It was not so with the one singled out by Fordham; pressed to a greater extent by the superior stride of Cossack, the perspiration streamed from every pore, and darkened his skin to a deep purplish hue. A smart burst up a gentle rise decided the issue, and, as the horse came up alongside, a well-planted bullet rolled the bull over. Fordham jumped off his horse and went up to the dying animal, and had a narrow escape of his life, for, suddenly springing up, it savagely rushed at him with its horns lowered. Springing nimbly aside Fordham avoided the charge, though his arm was grazed by one of the creature's horns, and he discharged his remaining barrel into him as he passed. He fell over with a groan and died.

In the meantime Milford had gained but little advantage, and he was on the point of giving up the chase, when fortune favoured him in a way he least expected. His horse, he felt, was no match for this bull at all events,

although Fordham had supposed, from its being an older and a heavier animal, that it would be the easier one to run down. It might perhaps on other ground, but Milford had felt the disadvantage of the boulders, and he knew the bull was gradually increasing his distance, whilst before them lay a nullah with steep banks; one far too wide to jump, and yet one which he was sure the nylghau would get over somehow quicker than himself. Well, he would try one thing; he would run up on the brink and try the effect of a long shot across. Down clattered the bull and rattled up the other side, and then—strange infatuation—he deliberately turned round and stood to see if he was being followed. It was a fatal pause, for Milford reined up short and discharged both barrels at him, when with a hoarse bellow he subsided like a spread-eagle on the ground. But for that fatal curiosity he might have escaped.

There was great feasting in the villages round about where there were Gonds; some came from a neighbouring market, where they had assembled for barter, and carried off a helping of meat to gladden the hearts of their families ten miles off. There was not an ounce of the two nylgaie wasted, and some poor people were disappointed by coming too late. The recipients were chiefly Gonds, and a few of the lowest caste of Hindoos. The Mahomedans were barred by the fact of the animals not having been properly *hālāled*, and the Hindoos will not eat the nylgaie on account of their resemblance to the cow.

The tongues and the marrow bones were appropriated by the successful hunters, the rest of the meat being too coarse to suit an English palate, and when the berries of the aonla tree,[1] of which the nylgaie are fond, are in

[1] *Phyllanthus Emblica.*

season, the intense astringent acid of the fruit pervades the flesh to such an extent as to be most marked, especially in soup. This fruit, which is a pretty, translucent, plum-like berry, growing in clusters on the feathery-leaved branches of one of the most ornamental of the forest trees, is most acrid, astringent, and bitterly acid. Both nylgaie and sambur are partial to it; the natives also use it both as a pickle and a sweet preserve, but in the latter case they employ some means of reducing the astringency, and then preserve it with honey.

At Bamanwarra Fordham shot a wild dog—the golden dog, or *sone kootta* of the natives; they usually go in packs, but this one was evidently a straggler, whose evil star led him in the way of that dead shot and enthusiastic naturalist.

It was a lanky, loose-jointed sort of animal, standing about twenty inches in height, with large erect ears, and a bushy tail, a more foxy than dog-like expression, and of a pale foxy or yellowish-red colour, the fore quarters slightly lower than the hind, which gave it an appearance of speed which it does not possess.

They hunt in packs, running down their game, which consists of deer, from the sambur to the gazelle, and also pigs, in the most systematic way. No trained hounds could do it better; what they lack in speed they make up for in unrelenting persistency, and trust to their powers of endurance; and woe betide the luckless animal that turns to bay. The natives, in all parts of India, declare that even tigers are attacked by them, and we once heard a very circumstantial account given of a fight, which took place near the station of Seonee, between a tiger and a pack of these dogs, in which the latter were victors. They followed him about, cautiously avoiding too close a contact, and worried him for three successive days, a

statement which should be received with caution; we have, however, heard of their annoying a tiger to such an extent as to make him surrender to them the prey which he had killed for himself.[1]

From Bamanwarra our friends marched to Chappara, the old capital of Seonee. Even now the two names are frequently coupled by the natives, and the district is called Seonee-Chappara.

At Chappara there is an old fort, now in ruins, which is said to have been built by Raja Ram Singh, a relative of Raja Bukht Buland of Deogurh, to whom the Seonee district had been ceded by Narendra Sah, as before related in these pages. Chappara afterwards came under Mahomedan rule, when the Mahratta ruler Raghojee offered Mahomed Khan, the son of the adventurous Taj Khan, before mentioned, the dewanship of the Seonee district, in exchange for the fortress of Sangurhee, which he held. Chappara was in Mahomed Khan's time attacked by the Mandla Raja, whilst the dewan was absent at Nagpoor. The garrison was put to the sword, and a large square tomb in the fort still marks the pit where the slain were buried.

Mahomed Khan, aided with large forces from Nagpoor, retook his fort, and drove back the Mandla Raja.

Mahomed Amin Khan, grandson of the first dewan, removed the seat of government to Seonee. Chappara, however, continued to flourish, and is said to have had over 9,000 houses, and 40,000 inhabitants. In the time of Mahomed Zuman Khan, son of Amin Khan, it was sacked by those lawless hordes, the Pindarees, and since then it has dwindled down to a mere village.

[1] The wild dog, *Cuon rutilans*, differs so much in its dentition from the typical *canis* as to justify modern naturalists in making it the type of a distinct genus—the second tubercular behind the flesh tooth in the lower jaw is wanting.

Popular tradition has it that the Pindarees found so much wealth, that, scorning silver and copper, they carried off only gold; and this was gravely asserted to Fordham by Bukroo Koormee, an octogenarian survivor of the raid.

There is a little fishing to be had at Chappara, in a long reach extending from the westward up to the fort, when the water shoals again and babbles over a rocky bed. At the time of which we speak the river had to be forded; now it is spanned by a noble bridge, over which the road from Jubbulpoor to Nagpoor runs, which was at that time the high road between Calcutta and Bombay.

The Lalla, who was always on the prowl for khubbur, learnt from some of the villagers that a panther had killed a foal in the enclosure of a house on the outskirts of a neighbouring village, and it required little persuasion to tempt Milford to go and sit up for him. So, accompanied by an old shikaree of the place, the Lalla set off to make a machaun in a tree near the remains of the foal, and having arranged everything to their satisfaction, they reported that all was ready, and waited till the evening, as Milford proposed having an early dinner first. The kill being so close to the village, it was reasonable to suppose the panther would not come before all was quiet, and the inhabitants asleep. Accordingly, after some unsuccessful fishing and an early dinner, Milford left Fordham to the enjoyment of a batch of new books, which the post from Seonee had just brought out, and started on the elephant for the little village. The dead *tattoo* lay just outside a bāree, or enclosure, belonging to one of the huts, and in the branches of an overhanging tamarind tree the Lalla had built the machaun. The night was pitch-dark, the moon being in her last quarter, but the

shikarees devised a plan which they declared answered well with panthers, though such a thing could not be attempted with so suspicious an animal as a tiger.

At some distance from the kill was suspended a common earthen pot called a *ghurra*, such as is used for carrying water; inside this was placed an oil-lamp, and a small hole was bored in the side of the vessel in such a position as to throw a single ray of light on the remains of the foal. The mouth of the *ghurra* was closed with a sod, and the whole was so fixed that the stream of light was steady.

The native idea is, that panthers are more brave than tigers, and, being more accustomed to prowl about human habitations, they do not mind fire or lights which they see in every hut.

Milford had, however, his doubts as to whether the panther would appear or not, and felt inclined several times to roll himself up and go to sleep. It was not such interesting work watching on the outskirts of a dirty village, with a smell of pigs and buffaloes around him, as in the wild and lonely forest, with the cries of strange night birds and the roar of the prowling tiger to arouse his curiosity or excite his nerves.

About midnight, however, the monotony was too much for him, and he went off into a doze, leaving the Lalla to watch; but he had not slept for more than half an hour when Moula awoke him; the panther had come and was at that moment savagely tugging at the foal, which he would doubtless have dragged away out of the light, had not the shikarees taken the precaution of tying one leg to a stake deeply driven into the ground. Milford quietly raised his rifle, which was already placed in position, and, taking advantage of the ray of light which brought out the animal into strong relief, he fired one

barrel which knocked him over, and the second before he had time to recover himself, which, however, he did, and bounded away into the gloom. It was uncertain what amount of damage had been done to the panther, and, as there was no chance of their finding out anything more about him that night, they shouted for the elephant and went back to Chappara. The panther was found dead next day at the edge of the water in a small tank not far from the village.

After one day more at Chappara, they rode into Seonee, a distance of twenty-one miles, where they intended staying a week preparatory to a tour through the southern part of the district.

One morning, a few days after their return to the station, Fordham's bearer rushed into his room at five o'clock with the news that a man had been killed by a tiger, half an hour before, in the village of Lugharwarra.

'At Lugharwarra?' asked his master incredulously, for the place was but an outlying suburb of the station.

'Yes, my lord; he went out at daybreak to let out his cows, and the tiger was lying in the tobacco garden behind his house, and it killed him.'

'It cannot be a tiger,' thought Fordham; 'some panther must have done it. However, we'll soon see. Here,' continued he aloud, 'tell them we shall want both the elephants, and send word to the Doctor sahib and the other sahibs to come over at once to chota hazree.'

'Now, Ernest,' said his companion, entering the former's room, 'look alive; here's some work in hand. A rascally panther, though they declare it is a tiger, has mauled or killed some poor fellow in that little village below the mosque, at the foot of the racecourse.'

'Are you sure it is not a tiger?'

'Well, no; nobody can make sure of such a thing

without personal investigation, but a tiger so seldom ventures near houses that I am inclined to think it is a panther.'

In a short time all were assembled in the breakfast-room, getting a hasty meal. There were five in all, and, as there were but two elephants, the doctor good-naturedly offered to take his chance from the roof of a hut.

The first thing to be done on reaching the place was to turn out all the people, and this was no easy matter; old women jabbered and gesticulated, as the unceremonious peons hustled them all out, but as it would have been dangerous to allow them to remain, Fordham personally superintended their removal, and they were all, finally, driven off like a flock of sheep, to a considerable distance from the village. Then came the helping up of the doctor on to the roof of the hut where the unfortunate man was killed. As the worthy M.D. had a fair amount of nature's bounty in the way of adipose tissue, being what you would call a fine-looking man without being a fat man, it was a matter of question whether the frail rafters would hold him. However, he scrambled up gingerly, and astride of the ridge pole had a commanding view. Milford, in the meantime, with a friend in the back seat of the howdah, had taken Bussunta round to the back of the house where was a large *bāree*, and garden, full of fine tobacco plants, through which a narrow path led to an out-house and cow-shed, where the luckless owner's cattle were kept at night.

The doctor had no sooner got fixed in his elevated position, and had time to look about him, than he spied the animal they were in quest of crouching amid the green tobacco leaves.

'I see him, I see him,' he shouted; 'look out for squalls—I'm going to stir him up.'

'Wait a bit, doctor,' cried Milford; 'let me stop up the gate, and then blaze away.'

The doctor waited till the elephant appeared at the entrance of the enclosure, and then, taking a good aim, fired.

To the astonishment of Fordham and the other three, up sprang a large tiger with a roar, and savagely charged the hut on which his assailant was; it was a grand sight to see the enraged beast try to spring on to the eaves, on which he got his fore-arms and paws, but, as he clutched with teeth and claws in his savage energy, the treacherous thatch gave way, and he rolled over on his back.

Milford was now sorry that he had yielded to the solicitations of the mahout's son—a smart boy of sixteen—and had allowed him to drive the elephant, thinking that a panther would do very well for his initiation into shikar work. But here was a tiger wounded and savage, and he wished for Akbar Ali; however, there was no help for it, and as the elephant was fond of the lad, and indeed obeyed him as well as she did his father, there was a chance of all going on well.

In spite of all Fordham's precautions, as soon as the sportsmen's backs were turned, some infatuated villagers came slouching into the village again, and stood talking and gaping in the main street.

The tiger picked himself up after his unsuccessful charge at the roof, and, seeing an open door before him, he rushed through it into the house and out at the opposite door into the street, bursting like a thunderbolt on the terrified knot of rustics, who turned to fly. With a savage grunt the infuriated animal sprang after them. One old man stood in his way, speechless and paralysed; with another bound the tiger would have been on him, when the old fellow turned to fly and fell flat on the

ground. A thrill ran through the spectators, for the old man's death seemed certain. But, no, the tiger cleared him with a bound, and rushing on after the others, singled out a young man, who attempted to escape by taking refuge in a house; as he turned to pull to the mat door the tiger seized him in the verandah. Then a piercing yell rang through the place, and a death-like stillness for a few seconds; then a sound of struggling, mingled with smothered growls as the tiger buried his fangs in the poor young fellow's side, and shook him as a terrier would shake a rat. It was, however, but a lifeless form he shook; the first rush and stroke had dashed out the vital spark, and the death of the second victim was more merciful than that of the first, who lingered all day with a fractured skull.

In vain Fordham urged his elephant to the rescue; he had half the round of the village to make. Milford was quite on the other side, and it would have been hopeless for him to get round in time, and the doctor could not stir from his perch.

The tiger left his victim, went up the street again, and, entering the door of the house he had passed through, went through it again and passed into the cow-shed, greatly to the terror of one unfortunate cow, which had been left in. Milford now brought up his elephant to the entrance of a little passage which led up between the cow-shed and another out-house, the door of the shed being at the upper end of the passage.

These erections—one can hardly call them buildings—are chiefly made of a framework of poles, and the walls of wicker-work, of either pliant twigs or more frequently split bamboo; occasionally, like the walls of the dwelling-houses, they are plastered with clay, but more often are left without; so that the dim form of the tiger as he

paced to and fro could be traced by the two sportsmen in the howdah. Milford was very nervous about his mahout—all depended on the steadiness of the boy, and of this he had great doubt; he had often been out in ordinary shooting, and once with a tiger, but the tiger was in open jungle and did not charge. Here was a case of fight or die, and the steadiness or unsteadiness of the elephant, which again depends entirely on the driver, would decide for success or the reverse.

Warning the boy in a low tone not to show fear, but to establish for himself that day a lasting reputation, Milford consulted with his friend how they should get out their enemy from the shed. Fireworks were out of the question—they would have set the whole village in a blaze—so they tried the effects of a revolver, and half a dozen shots were fired without any result beyond a few growls.

'This will never do, Milford,' remarked his friend; 'let us give him a barrel apiece, and see if that will fetch him out.'

'All right,' said the other; so they levelled and fired through the walls of the shed.

He looked out of the door for a moment, and with a savage grunt down he came on them.

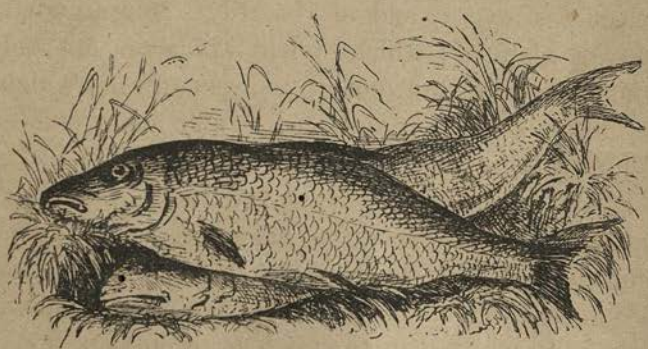
The poor lad lost heart, and, hardly knowing what he was about, he turned the elephant round. Of course the moment her head was from the foe, panic-stricken she tore through the frail walls of the out-house, and rushed through the tobacco yard, followed by the tiger fiercely striking at her heels. At last a shot from one of the pursued pair turned him, and he took refuge in another hut close by. In the meantime Bussunta was stopped and pacified, and the boy well scolded, and they went up again; but no amount of fusilading would bring the

tiger out. He had got into a dark corner of the house, and there he sulked. At last the doctor hit on a bright idea. He gave his Madrassee servant his revolver, and told him to climb from hut to hut till he got to the one in which the tiger was, and then to scratch a hole through the thatch and fire the revolver down into the chamber below. The plan answered admirably, and out came the animal again, looking as savage as he could, when another ball in the side from the doctor drove him into a corner, where he laid himself down.

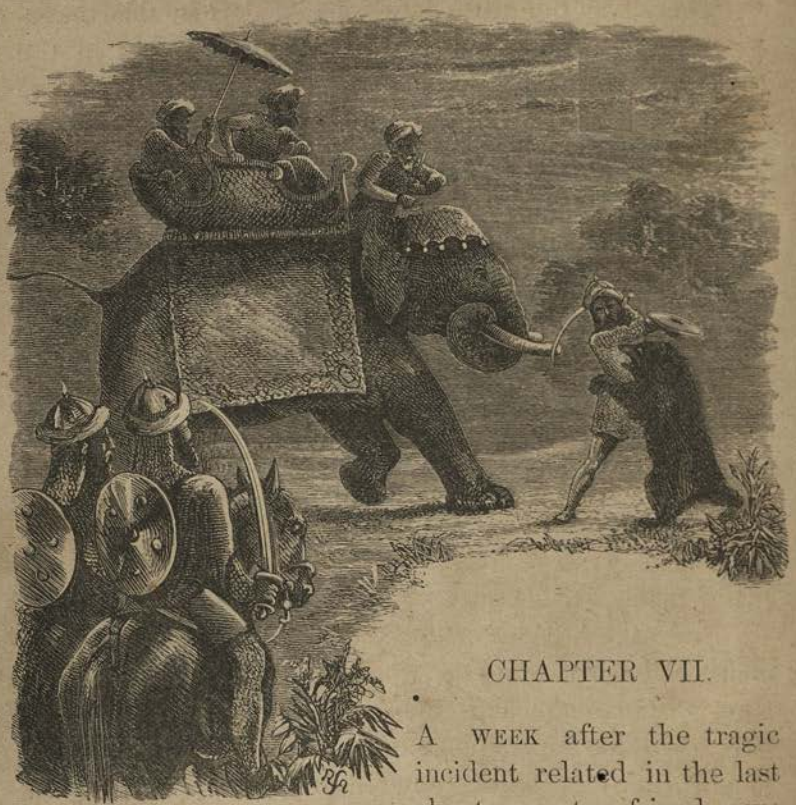
The boy mahout seemed thoroughly ashamed of himself, and this time, without urging, he took his elephant up in fine style. The tiger was crouching with his head on the ground, and Milford closed his career by a bullet between his eyes; and all heartily congratulated the doctor on his prize, which he had well won, not only by virtue of the first shot, but of the second one, which was also in a vital part, and indeed would have sufficed to kill him without the last shot in the head.

It was then, on examining the body, that they discovered that this was the very tiger that they had wounded at Ragadehi; there was the old bullet wound in the shoulder from Beech's rifle, and it had led, as he mournfully predicted, to the loss of human life. Not that the tiger had taken to man-eating—there was no such charge laid against him; but he had evidently followed the herds down from their pasture grounds, and had sneaked into the tobacco garden, to lie in wait for the liberation of the cattle in the early morning. It appeared from the accounts given by the villagers that the wounded man got up before daylight to milk his cows, and in crossing the yard he must have stumbled over the tiger, who with one blow fractured his skull, but did not attempt to carry him off.

There was one little ludicrous incident in this otherwise tragic scene. The cow that had been left in the shed with the tiger, on finding the coast clear, came trotting out with her tail cocked up in the air, and then giving a few inelegant bounds, after the manner of her race, she began calmly to graze, seemingly as unconcerned as if she were quite accustomed to being shut up with surly tigers. It had evidently had no lasting effect on her nerves.



MAHSEER AND SALMON.



CHAPTER VII.

A WEEK after the tragic incident related in the last chapter, our two friends were standing, at daybreak, on the top of the Koraie Pass, watching the glorious scene before them. Although the month was May, at that early hour of the morning the breeze was cool and laden with the fresh perfume of many sweet-scented flowers. The harsinga [1] and the tinsa [2] were still in blossom, with many another fragrant shrub that lined the roadway of the *ghât*. The broad-leaved teak clothed the sides of the steep mountains, mingled with the feathery siris [3] and the stately sāj.[4] Here and there a leprous-

[1] *Nyctanthes Arbor tristis.*
[2] *Dalbergia oujeinensis.*
[3] *Acacia Serissa.*
[4] *Pentaptera Urjoona.*

looking oolee[1] spread forth its white distorted arms, reminding one of that strange picture of Gustave Doré's in Dante's 'Inferno,' of the human trees, so contorted and agonized do they look.

The hills were resounding to the loud cries of the black cuckoo, the pea-fowl, and the jungle-cock; the skylark overhead was pouring forth a flood of melody, and in every bush some sibilant warbler strained its tiny throat. The turtle-dove soared up over his mate, who was quietly sitting on a topmost branch, flapping his wings as he rose straight up over her, and then down he dropped beside her, cooing his satisfaction at the performance; bright green little paroquets, with heads like bloomy Orleans plums, chattered and screamed as they fluttered about; and far overhead, in the blue sky, circled the grim vulture, whose piercing eye swept the plains below for his prey.

From the hill-sides came the sound of axes where the charcoal-burners were at work, and along the road the shouts of drovers and the tinkling of cattle-bells told that man too was going forth to his work and to his labour till the evening; and dead indeed must be the heart of the man to whom, in such a scene, the words of the Psalmist came to memory, if he did not feel, and repeat to himself, the fervid utterance of the minstrel king:

'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches!'

The preceding verses of the same Psalm were peculiarly applicable to the spot where we have placed our reader, when it speaks of the beasts of the forest getting them away to their dens as the sun ariseth. For

[1] *Sterculia urens.*

the Koraie Pass has always been noted for tigers, and it was by no means safe for anyone to venture down it by night alone. The dreaded man-eater of Koraie had baffled the best shikarees of the district, with old Sheykha at their head, and his beat, from a lonely dell called the Sāt-talao, or seven-tanks, beyond the village of Rookhur, to the foot of the pass, was the scene of many a violent death. The view from the top of the pass was varied and extensive, and was even more beautiful than that from the rival pass of Silwa, on the northern edge of the plateau, looking towards Jubbulpoor.

The prevailing geological formation of the north is trap, and the trees are stunted compared with those on the southern face of the range, which consists of gneiss and micaceous schist. The trees are larger and more varied, and the eye wanders over thick-leaved forests, and the sandy course of streams, which during nine months of the year are mostly dry.

Patches of cultivation here and there dot the plain, but they are sparsely scattered, for the talooqa of Dongertal is chiefly a grazing country, inhabited by Aheers, whose wealth consists of their cattle, and whose cultivation is limited to the few fields of maize or pulse which are necessary for the requirements of each village. Growing for exportation they never think of; what they do export is their *ghee*, or butter, the produce of their buffaloes.

The want of good water is also a bar to the extension of agriculture. There are few tanks, and the streams hold but little water on the surface. It percolates through the sandy beds, and can be obtained a few feet below the level of the sand by digging, and in rude wells thus excavated in the beds of nullahs, and lined with wooden slabs to prevent them falling in, the

villagers in these jungles get their supply of water during the summer.

A charitable Mahomedan land-owner belonging to another part of Seonee, Wazeer Mahomed Khan, of Ashta, in travelling through Dongertal and Durasee, had noted this scarcity of water, and he conceived the idea of damming up a narrow gorge in one of the Durasee hills and so forming a reservoir, which would not only store an ample supply for travellers along the Bunjara track, but would throw back the water along the tributary streams for miles, instead of its being drained off as before So as a work of charity he took it in hand, after having obtained the permission of Government, and in the lonely forest the calm surface of the silent lake bears perpetual testimony to the good deed of the worthy Pathan, now gathered to his rest.

Fordham and Milford stood for a while admiring the view which lay before them—the varied forest and pasture lands, the ramifications of the Bawunthurree River with its fifty-two branches, as its name implies, and at their feet the little village of Koraie, with its tank covered with the floating leaves of the singhara, or water nut.

They had ridden fast from Mohgaon, the village where they last camped, and gave their horses a little breathing time whilst they enjoyed the scenery. On their way from Seonee they had halted one day at Gopalgunj, near which they had ridden down and speared two fair-sized boars, which they turned out of some cane fields. The animals made off across country to the heavy jungle beyond Burgaon and Khapa, and though a portion of the riding ground was bad, being cotton soil, full of holes, yet a rattling burst over the laterite beds bordering the jungle carried the day for the riders, much to the delight of the villagers whose crops the creatures had

been destroying. There is not much pigsticking to be had in the Seonee district, as the ground is not always favourable, and the enormity of shooting the animal is not only allowed but frequently practised.

The two friends walked down the pass, the roadway of which was not so good then as it is now, being more like the bed of a mountain torrent, and when they arrived at Koraie, and passed through the main street, they saw at the stables of the mail stage a little rude veterinary practice being carried out. A horse was having its quarters bathed and rubbed with turmeric and indigo. On looking more closely at the operation, they noticed several parallel scars as if an iron rake had been ploughed over the place.

'A tiger has been at that fellow,' remarked Fordham. 'What is the matter?' he asked of the darogah, who came out and salaamed respectfully to the hakim.

'Protector of the poor! that accursed tiger of Rookhur—may Allah cause him some day to eat bullets—attacked the Bombay mail last night, and nearly got hold of Gholam Shurreef, who was the rider. The tiger heard the bugle and came out and headed him. On this Gholam Shurreef turned back, and galloped towards Seonee, but the tiger chased him along the jungle and headed him again; so then he turned once more, and made a push for the ghât. The tiger then made a rush at him, but the horse was too fleet, and he could not get hold of him to pull him down; yet he gave him these wounds. May the vultures pick his bones before long! As for Gholam Shurreef, Allah has preserved him this time, but I tell him "Do you blow your horn to invite the devil to dinner, as do those Kafirs of Hindoos?[1] Then

[1] He here wilfully perverts the habit: the Brahmins blow the conch-shell before meals to frighten away devils.

don't blow it again on the Koraie Pass, otherwise there will be no one to tie your great toes together when your time comes."'[1]

'I wish we could destroy that tiger,' said Fordham as they walked on.

'Have you ever tried?' asked Milford.

'Yes, and I have given it up in disgust; unless he is caught over a kill, I don't know how we are to get him. The country cannot be scoured by elephants, and he is too cunning to be circumvented by the ordinary methods. I have tried myself, and have had gangs of shikarees after him, but all to no purpose. When a man-eater takes to a ghât, it is a most difficult thing to dislodge him.'[2]

The Dāk Bungalow, or Traveller's Rest-house, to which they made their way, was situated on an open ground a little to the south of the village. As the weather was now very hot—especially so below the ghats—Fordham decided on staying in the bungalow during the day, and sleeping in tents at night.

The day passed monotonously, as most days do in the hot weather in an Indian Dāk Bungalow. The blinding glare and fierce heat of the sun outside rendered it advisable to darken the rooms as much as possible, which also assisted in keeping out the flies which swarmed to such an extent as to prevent them getting any breakfast in comfort. As soon as that meal was over, and the cracked cups and saucers carried away with the table-cloth, that looked as if it had been composed of old white drill trousers unpicked and stitched together again in its present shape, the doors and windows were closed, and the inmates of the room prepared to pass the day according

[1] The Mussulman custom is here alluded to, of tying the big toes of the dead together before burial. [2] See Notes.

to their individual fancies. The apartment had two doors opening out on verandahs east and west; in the latter door was placed a khus-khus tattie. Two other doors, north and south, opened into little bed-rooms with bath-rooms attached. The furniture was of the simplest kind: a rickety dining-table with four crazy chairs, and an old bedstead, formed the furniture of the principal room; the bare whitewashed walls were ungarnished save for squirts of tobacco juice or elegant charcoal designs by amateurs in the fine arts. The library consisted of an old Testament and a few tracts which were contained in a little box with a glass door, like a wooden lantern, which hung from a nail in the wall. A few fat lizards crawled about, and the punkah frill was a favourite hiding-place for bats, which held on in spite of the vigorous pulling of a small boy who was hired for the day. Fordham took out his writing-case and a box of papers, but Milford resigned himself to the *dolce far niente*, and, making himself a shake-down on the bedstead before mentioned, applied himself to the literature afforded by the wooden lantern, which, aided by the dripping of the water over the tatties, the swinging of the punkah, the monotonous scratching of Fordham's pen as it dashed over the paper, and the sleepy notes of the little red-headed barbet[1]—the coppersmith as the natives call him—that kept up an incessant touk-touk-touk in the pipul tree at the corner of the bungalow, proved a speedy soporific, and before long the young man was in the land of dreams. Nor did he wake till long after the usual hour for tiffin; and well it was for him that he had taken his rest during the day, for he was destined to have little of it that night.

It was a regular Indian hot-weather evening, when

[1] *Megalaima philippensis.*

the doors were thrown open and the two friends sallied out. The sun was going down, but there was no coolness in the breeze; a dry, lime-kiln-like feeling pervaded the atmosphere, and the distant landscape still quivered in the haze caused by the radiation of heat from the earth; the sky above was without a cloud, and in the east, over a murky bank, rose the broad disc of the full moon like a globe of burnished copper. The animals around seemed as though they had hardly yet recovered from the lethargy into which they had been plunged by the extreme sultriness, and the only living creatures which had any degree of life left were a couple of little owlets, or Punch and Judy birds,[1] as we used to call them, which in the recesses of an old fig tree kept up an incessant squabble; and the king-crows,[2] which, squatting on the backs of somnolent buffaloes, now and then made a dart after some wandering cricket or locust, or a raid after an intrusive crow, and then returned to their living perches. They are amusing birds, these glossy-black, sprightly king-crows or drongo shrikes; little, fearless, aggressive rascals are they—no bigger than a blackbird, they recklessly attack a hawk three times their size, and they seem to have a particular antipathy to crows, and pursue them on every opportunity. The graceful motions of this bird when hawking insects, or chasing other birds, always reminded us of the velocity and ease with which the coryphene[3] follows the flying-fish. The king-crow has a pleasing note, and one of the family, the *bhimraj*, or large racket-tailed drongo,[4] the hazar dastan, or bird of the thousand tales as the Orientals call it, is a highly-gifted creature, rivalling the mocking-bird in the variety of its accomplishments, and a clever bird always commands a fancy price.

[1] *Athene Brama.* [2] *Dicrurus macrocercus.*
[3] *Coryphæna hipparis*: erroneously termed by sailors the dolphin.
[4] *Edolius paradiseus.*

They took a walk round the tank, where the dheemurs, or fishermen, in their long narrow canoes, hewn out of the solid trunk of a cotton tree, were paddling about, turning over the leaves of the singhara,[1] and carefully detaching the water-slugs and snails which were likely to damage the plant. In the winter the seeds or nuts, which are much eaten by the natives, are gathered, and the cultivation of the plant is a considerable source of revenue to those who own large tanks.

Very picturesque was the sight of the calm waters, dotted with patches of broad floating leaves, and reflecting the mingled rays of the rising moon on the one hand and the deeper tints of the glowing west on the other. On the northern side stretched a dark belt of trees, over which in the background towered the range of the ghâts, and all around the gloom of night was settling over many miles of lonely forest, in which, to the widely scattered hamlets, herds of cattle and buffaloes were wending their way, leaving their pasture grounds to the beasts of the field.

As the two friends walked on, they crossed a small patch of jungle in which were feeding a herd of buffaloes. Avoiding the animals as much as possible—for, docile and attached as they are to their keepers, they are uncertain in their tempers towards strangers—they looked with interest at the calling home of the unwieldy creatures by the slip of a lad who tended them. The boy stood in an open space, and made most extraordinary noises, a mixture of a Swiss yodel and a Pawnee war-whoop; but the uncouth sounds met with responsive grunts and bellows from the jungle, and one by one the buffaloes gathered round, most of them coming up at a gallop.

'One would hardly give such awkward, stupid-look-

[1] *Trapa bispinosa.*

ing creatures credit for so much attachment,' remarked Milford.

'It is all the way in which they are brought up,' said his companion. 'They are reared from the day of their birth, as the Arab horse is, in the hut of their master, with the children rolling over their backs. They grow up with the youngsters and cling to them through life. I think the buffalo, stupid as he looks, is a far finer character than the ox; see how faithfully he defends his herdsmen from the attacks of tigers; and I will tell you how the attachment of one of these animals saved the life of her master in time of war.

'I was engaged with some troops against a rebel chief, who in his blind folly thought he could assume the aggressive against the British Government, and a good thrashing he got for his pains. The day after the action was employed in scouring the neighbouring jungles, with a view to preventing the re-organization of the scattered forces of the enemy, and amongst other prisoners taken was a man who was evidently not a soldier, but a camp follower or hanger-on of the chief, who was seized with his wife, mother, and a buffalo cow. Of course when the man was secured I told the women they might go. The wife, a handsome Brahmin girl, threw herself at my feet, and begged me to let her husband go, and, finding I could not do so, she tried the other tack, and abused me like a little fury. However, nothing could be done for her; I did not feel justified in liberating the man, and we marched off, leaving her and the old woman to follow. The buffalo had dashed off into the jungle as soon as the prisoners were surrounded by the soldiers.

'Well, we had a long and fatiguing march to make through wild country, winding along the bottom of the valleys, and occasionally skirmishing over hills through

thick brushwood. The buffalo all the time never lost sight of her master, though she would not come near the red coats of the Sepoys. Now and then in the thickest jungle the prisoner would raise a call, which met invariably with an answering grunt, and the faithful animal would come crashing through the thicket and stop short with a bellow when she saw the troops. About three o'clock we called a halt by the side of a small stream; we were hot, and tired, and hungry; none of us had had any solid food for many hours. The Brahmin looked at me and said, "Sahib, if you will untie my hands I will give you all milk." We did so, and he called to his buffalo again. She came, but would not approach the troops. "Sahib, you must let me go to her; she will not come near you. I will not run away," he added. "Very well, my good friend," I replied, "you shall go to her, but mind if you run this rifle never fails, and you shall be dropped dead before you go three yards." "Nay, sahib, I have said I will not run away;" so he took a brass lotah from one of the Sepoys, and went up and milked his buffalo and came back to bondage again. Well, in the evening a court-martial was held on all the prisoners, who, as rebels, were sentenced to death; but a saving clause was found for the owner of the buffalo. We could not find in our hearts to be hard on him, and as he had not been found amongst the fighting men we told him to be off. With a low prostration he murmured blessings on our heads, and bounded off into the jungle. The last we heard of him was his call to his buffalo, and the answering grunt as she ran to meet him.'

'What became of the wife?'

'I don't know. I hope she and the old mother fell in with the husband soon, and that the fright they re-

ceived, as well as the clemency shown to him, prevented their ever joining a rebellion again.'

They were now at their camp again, which was pitched near the Dāk Bungalow, and they intended to dine and sleep in their tents, as being more free from cockroaches and other smaller cattle than the house.

Moula here came up, and had a low and earnest conversation with Milford.

'The Lalla is a regular *diavolo tentatore*, Fordham,' said the young man, laughing; 'he wants me to go out with him after dinner, to some pool in the jungles, three or four miles off.'

'I know the place,' said the other. 'Moula has given up his persuasive powers on me now; my old bones want more rest than can be had on the branch of a tree, but you are sure to get something there, as there is not another drop of water for miles round, save in the big tank here. It's a tigerish road, however, and we have no elephant with us.'

'Well, it's not quite in my commission "for to be aten by woild bastes," as an Irish friend of mine used to say of tiger-hunting, but we'll try it after dinner.'

At nine o'clock that evening, in the glorious light of the full moon in an unclouded sky, Milford and the Lalla, armed to the teeth, set off on their lonely walk through the jungle, a proceeding by no means devoid of danger, for though the regular beat of the man-eater of Koraie was along the main road, still there were other tigers in abundance, even if he himself had not taken a wandering fit in the direction they were going. However, they were bent on their expedition, and strode along at a rapid pace over the gravelly path, which led through the forest skirting the base of the hills. The places where

they kept the keenest look-out were the little sandy nullahs, of which they had many to cross. At one place they were startled by a sounder of wild pigs dashing over the road, but these were the only animals they came across. After an hour's brisk walking they came upon an open space, where some years before there had been a small village, of which now not a trace remained, save a little deep tank, which held water all the year round, and was greatly used now by the beasts of the forest. At one corner stood a stunted dhaoura tree,[1] the highest branch of which, capable of bearing the weight of two men, was certainly not more than ten feet from the ground; but there was no other tree near, and into this they climbed, and by lashing a couple of poles between the forks of the branches made a rude seat, on which they perched themselves and waited. Milford had taken a strong cup of coffee without milk before starting, to keep himself awake, and he thought, as he sat with his legs dangling, that it was hardly the place for nodding; it was difficult enough to keep himself steady as it was, and he began after a while to think he had been rash in committing himself to stay all night like an ape on the branch of a tree. He was already beginning to feel rather crampy, and pulling out his watch he held it in a ray of moonlight, and saw it was nearly midnight.

'Sahib,' whispered the Lalla, 'I see some animal coming down from the jungle on the opposite side of the tank.'

'So do I,' replied Milford; 'what is it, Moula?'

'I don't know, my lord, but I think it is a tiger; he is sure to come to this corner to drink, for the bank is steep all round but here, and this is the regular place, so look out, sahib, on your side.'

[1] *Conocarpus latifolia.*

Milford placed himself so that his gun commanded his left front, and anxiously waited. Whatever the animal was, it was extremely cautious, for, slinking back into the shadow of the jungle, it skirted the thicket on its way round, and could hardly be made out. The young sportsman waited and waited, and had almost lost hope, when the Lalla quietly pressed his thigh, and made a backward motion with his thumb.

As Milford looked over his right shoulder, his eyes met those of a large tiger, who stood in the bright light of the moon, with his head raised, staring full at the occupants of the tree.

It had a most startling effect, and for a second curdled the young fellow's blood. The large green eyes scintillating with phosphorescent light fixed on his, the close proximity, almost within a bound, of the animal, the surprise of having the tables turned as it were, for a second were too much, and the two stared at each other in blank amazement. But it was only for a second, and here a practice of Milford's boyish days stood him in good stead. When he began his sporting career by popping at thrushes and blackbirds, or at the rabbits on the Ferndale estate, he had an old single-barrel gun, the terror of his mother, which, though he assured her it was a most excellent, well-behaved weapon, kicked most furiously, so much so as to make his shoulder quite sore after a day's work; so he practised steadily with the left shoulder, and after a time he could shoot with either which happened to be unbruised. So, on this occasion, as he could not possibly get round on the bough, he brought his rifle to the left shoulder, and fired full into the tiger's chest. The animal reared on receiving the shot, and fell over, struggling violently; then, getting up, he plunged into the thicket, where they heard him

tumbling about and groaning, and made quite sure of getting him in the morning; but, alas for the many slips between the cup of success and the lip of the hunter!

When morning dawned, and they cautiously descended the tree and peered about, the tiger was not to be seen. A pool of blood lay on the ground under the tree, and a plain track led into the jungle. Half-way on the road back to Koraie, whither they were going for assistance, they met a herd of buffaloes, and got the man to drive them back. Taking up the trail from the first pool of blood, they tracked him to where they had heard him groaning, where was another large stain; from this the trail led to a deep, dark, rocky ravine, to go down which in search of a wounded tiger would have been madness, and there they were obliged to leave him.

The herdsmen declared that he would die, and that in a few days they would descend and see; but that was small consolation to poor Ernest Milford, who mourned the loss of the trophy, although there was some satisfaction in having rid the country of another scourge. The Lalla decided from the frothy appearance of the blood that his wounds were mortal, and through the lungs. He hurled down rocks into the gloomy depths below, and shouted till he was hoarse, but no responding growl or groan could be heard, and so convinced did he seem of the tiger's death, that he would have gone down to look had not Milford restrained him. Promising the herdsmen a reward if they could secure him the skull, Milford retraced his steps to Koraie, rather disgusted at his misfortunes.

Those who have practised much night shooting in Indian jungles will sympathise with our young friend, for many must have been their failures. Even in broad daylight, with every facility for immediately following up a

wounded tiger, how often in the rocky hills of Central India does he escape! and at night, unless the bullet lays him low at once, the hours between midnight and dawn are spent in crawling away and hiding in some inaccessible place, and the baffled hunter has to go home empty-handed, as did our young friend Ernest on this occasion.

From Koraie they made a rapid march to Allikutta, on the banks of the Pench—a dreary, wild tract, into which they had to carry all their own supplies, there being no village. Here they encamped under a splendid old banyan tree, one peculiar feature of which was, that the enormous centre trunk was split in half and had a passage through it, so that Fordham's tent being on one side, and the kitchen tent on the other, the servants passed through the tree instead of going round outside.

Here they got some spotted deer, but the jungle was very thick, and abounded with tigers, judging from their tracks, though they did not come across any. The weather was excessively hot, and as their supply of provisions was limited, they were obliged to make forced marches, and stay a very short time at each place. It was a very wild part of the country; for miles along the river Pench there was not a human habitation; thousands of acres, which may ultimately come under the plough, were covered with forest, which afterwards formed one of the Government timber preserves. Here used to grow the finest teak trees of the district, but they had been considerably thinned by the Mahratta princes, in whose palaces and pleasure-houses massive carved teak wood is much mingled with masonry. As yet the name of a railroad was unknown in the land, and the noble saj,[1] and kouha,[2] and the umbrageous rohnee[3] grew scathless

[1] *Pentaptera tomentosa.* [2] *Pentaptera Urjoona.*
[3] *Swietenia febrifuga.*

from the contractor's axe, and made a pleasant feature in the landscape. Nylgaie and sambur abounded, and several fell to the rifles of our two friends as they explored the hills of Salāmgurh and Chikhulkharee.

Towards the end of the week they found themselves at Dongertāl, or rather at the little adjacent village of Deolapar on the high road, where was a Dāk Bungalow.

The day after their arrival Milford was initiated, by the Pathan malgoozar of Dongertāl, in the art of shooting nylgaie from a cart. At daybreak the young Pathan was in attendance at the bungalow with a neat little khanchur, or small low-wheeled gig, to which were yoked a pair of beautiful white oxen, of a breed for which Dongertāl is famous; spotlessly white, with silky coats, and large dark antelope eyes, they looked as spirited as they afterwards proved. Eight miles an hour is an ordinary pace for these cattle, and some can trot even ten miles with ease.

Long before the sun was up they were trotting merrily along towards the hills, past the village of Dongertāl, the quiet lake and the old fort, and on towards the heavy jungle. The malgoozar drove, and Milford sat on a good thick bed of straw with a blanket thrown over it, with his legs dangling over the back of the khanchur, an arrangement which was more comfortable for him than the orthodox method of sitting; for English legs are not given to double up like pocket-compasses; and then, again, the elasticity of the bed of straw made up for the want of springs, which was no small consideration, taking into account the state of the roads, which were cart tracks of the rudest description.

The little bullocks trotted away cheerily, over hill and down dale and at last they came within sight of a herd of nylgaie, for which the Pathan headed his pair, keeping

a few points off. Milford watched the process with interest, determining not to fire till they could get close enough to frighten the animals; he did not feel very keen about this sort of sport, which seemed to him rather like butchery, and there was one gallant old bull in the herd that he longed to have out on the plain with a good horse under him. This was a poaching sort of business after all, and not one to be proud of; however, it was but once in a way he was likely to make use of it, and it would not do to disappoint his friend the malgoozar. Thoughts, such as these, drifted through his brain as the Pathan drove his little bullocks quite close up to the herd, and the females and calves began to trot off, but the old bull still stood facing them.

'Now, sahib, now is your time,' whispered the malgoozar.

Milford jumped off the cart, and, aiming full at the bull's white chest, fired. He dropped to the shot, seemingly dead; the Pathan ran forward, and unsheathed his knife, but now the nylghau began to kick vigorously. Milford rested his gun against a tree, and ran up to help, but the animal rose suddenly to his legs, and, sending them flying with a few vigorous kicks, plunged into the thicket. The young Englishman could not help laughing at the rueful countenance of his companion, as he picked himself up.

However, the blue bull had to be followed, so they dashed after him as soon as they had recovered from their astonishment. Not a trace of him was to be found; they circled round, narrowing their rings to a central point, but to no avail, and were just on the point of giving up the search when Milford, to his surprise, saw him standing about thirty yards off, broadside on. He immediately gave him a barrel, and while the answering *thud* told of

the shot having taken effect, it produced no change in the attitude of the beast. Here was a curious thing; it could not be dead in that erect posture—then why no movement? The young Pathan muttered 'Bismillah! kya tajoob ke bāt!' Milford was about to fire again, when he thought he would go closer up; the bull was standing with his legs straddled wide apart, and his neck and head stretched out as if in a trance. The young sportsman went up to within a yard or two, but there was no movement; so raising his rifle and taking aim at the poor beast's ear, he fired, and with a hoarse bellow the bull fell and breathed his last. The only reason for this eccentric proceeding was the probability of the internal hemorrhage choking up the windpipe, and causing suffocation, though the young Pathan seemed to think there was something 'no canny' about it.

The whole affair was, however, but little pleasing to Milford; there was a tameness about it which took away from the satisfaction which the hunter feels after he has had a struggle for his quarry; and as the young man looked at his blue bull, he wished the old fellow were still roaming the hills. It seemed to him a mean advantage; as the animals are so accustomed to come across the villagers' carts, they take no heed of them. Fordham had predicted he would find it tame work, and so it had proved. However, the Pathan was pleased, and there would be meat for the poor, and this last was the saving clause; so they trotted back to send a larger cart for the bull.

In the evening the friends walked over to the ruins of the old fort, built by Taj Khan, the adventurer. Very little of it now remains, save the outer walls, and a chamber or two over a gateway, in which an old *fakeer* had taken up his abode. Behind the stronghold rose a

rugged hill, and on the other side the waters of Dongertāl reflected the loopholed battlements of the red sandstone towers. Within all was a chaos of broken stone and stunted shrubs, and the sole living creature, save the birds and the bright-eyed lizards, was the decrepit old ascetic, who now hobbled to meet them.

'Allah toojé kheyr kurrey, baba!' chanted the old man in a quavering voice.

Fordham, who knew the habits and customs of the devotees, or religionists, better than most Europeans, replied, 'Salaam hi, shah sahib;' and held out a few small coins.

As they dropped into the fakeer's palsied palm, as he stood resting himself on a long staff, the old man peered into the face of the donor, and said,

'It is not like your race, sahib, to give aught to the fakeer save the alms of the stick, and you know the forms of address of my people too.'

'I have lived among your people long, and who would lift a finger against an old man like you, dada?'

'Ah, all are not like you, but we bring it on ourselves. There are fakeers *bey-shurra* as well as fakeers *ba-shurra*,[1] and they bring suspicion on all alike.'

'But what makes you live here all alone by yourself, old friend?'

'Ay, what indeed? Time was, sahib, when these trembling hands wielded the sword and the lance; time was when no horse could shake off these stiff-jointed limbs; but the war-path is over, and I am on the turreequt, or path to heaven. My prayers and my meditations are now my weapons; and here all is peace. The birds sing in the bushes, the lizards glide over the

[1] *Bey-shurra*, i.e. without the law; *Ba-shurra*, with the law.

stones, and they bask in the light that Allah pours on us all; there is no bickering and strife amongst them.'

'Yet, shah sahib, the scream of the hawk as she darts on her prey, and the snarl of the panther in these hills at night, must tell you of war even amongst the creatures that surround you.'

'True, my son, true it is what you say, there is war and destruction wherever we go; but with these the motive is different: the pangs of unthinking hunger in the brute are not wickedness before Allah, but the strife of mankind has its origin in hatred and malice, and the deadliest sins.'

'I say, Ernest,' said his companion, 'I like this old fellow, there is something superior about him, and I should like to have some further conversation with him. I am afraid the delay will bore you. Would you like to look round the place for game whilst I sit here and have a chat, and you could pick me up again when you have made the round of the tank and hill? There are lots of pea-fowl if nothing else starts up. But, mind you, I don't want to get rid of you if you would prefer to stay; only I thought you were getting bored.'

'Well,' answered the young man, laughing, 'I cannot follow the old gentleman in all his sentences, so I think I will take a stroll round, and afterwards you can tell me what he has had to say.'

As soon as the young sportsman strode off with his gun across his shoulder, Fordham sat down on a slab of stone outside the fort gate, and told the old fakeer, in a kindly way, to sit down and have a talk.

'Huzrut,' said he, using a term of the highest respect applied by Mahomedans to those who take upon themselves sacred vows, 'you are well stricken in years, and must have seen much in your lifetime.'

'Eighty-and-five years have I lived, and much evil have I seen. I have travelled in my time far and wide; the cities and shrines of the saints from Delhi to the Deccan have I seen, and twice have I made the pilgrimage to Mecca.'

'And you come to end your days like an owl in a ruined old fort. Is this well, my friend?'

'And why not? Have I not said here is peace. I want no food—I have more laid on my doorstep by the people of the place than I can eat; the air is good, and the waters of the lake are as pure almost as those of the Beer-i-zem-zem.[1] I forget the strife of the past, and I pray that all men may live in peace in the true faith.'

'So do we; we wish all men to live in peace in our faith, but we do not succeed; there are divisions amongst us, as there are amongst the Soonees and Shiahs of your religion.'

'Ay, yes; men will create dissensions in all creeds, but there is no God but one, and Mahomed is his prophet.'

'We agree with you in the first part of that creed, but not in the last,' said Fordham, with a smile.

'Ah, no, you are followers of Huzrut Esau (upon whom be the blessing and peace of God), and he was the greatest of the prophets. But ye are wilfully blind to the subsequently revealed mysteries, and ye have also departed from the laws which were laid down to you by Huzrut Moosa regarding what ye should eat and drink, and that is not well.'

'We certainly do not follow the strict law of Moses,

[1] The sacred well at Mecca, supposed by the Mahomedans to be the fount that sprang out of the ground at the prayer of Hagar when she wandered with Ishmael in the wilderness. The water is supposed to be the purest in the world, and to have miraculous properties.

which has been adopted also by your prophet, for the teachings of Huzrut Esau—than whom, you confess, existed no greater prophet, and whose miraculous birth you acknowledge—lead us to lay greater stress on purity of heart, and love towards God and man, than on forms and ceremonies. Is it not written in the Anjeel that he did works on the Sabbath day in healing the sick, to the offending of the stricter sects of the Jews, and doth he not say himself, "It is not that which goeth in at the mouth of a man that defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth of a man, such as evil-speaking, lying, and slandering"?'

'Was that really said by Huzrut Esau?'

'I quote from the book.'

'It is true, it is the word of truth,' and the old man said, 'Repeat the words again.'

Fordham did so, and after a while he broke the silence which ensued, by saying,

'Has it never struck you, peer sahib, you who have travelled and seen much, that those countries in which the Christian, or Esaie, religion prevails are ever the most civilised and successful in all they undertake, as compared with other nations of the world, and especially those of the purer, simpler Protestant faith?'

'I have thought over it, my son, often and often, and the soldiers of the Cross do prevail over the armies of the faithful, but who can read the intentions of Allah? Did he not permit dissensions even in the family of his holiness Mahomed Moostaffa, on whom be the peace and blessing of God? Were not his grandsons both slain by their enemies? The ways of the Infinite are inscrutable—who knows?—there may be those of the Christian faith with whom the angels Moonkir and Nukeer may find no fault, and to whom the bridge of Al

Sirat, which is as sharp as the edge of a sword, may be as broad as a cartway. Time was when I deemed it impossible, but now I wait to see; the solution is at hand, and the wing of the angel Isra-eel is fanning my cheek.'

'Are you a native of these parts, Hajee Sahib?' asked the Englishman carelessly.

'I would answer that question usually by saying that, where there is a sod below and a sky above, there is the native land of the fakeer. But you are a man of discretion, sahib, and a man of learning, and my heart yearns towards you. Hear then my story, but repeat it not to the inhabitants of this place. What would it profit them to know that the hermit whom they have fed with the bread of charity was the Nawab Khan Mahomed Khan, a direct descendant of Dewan Mahomed Taj Khan, the builder of this fort?'

The history of his life which the old hermit gave Fordham was noted down on the latter's return to his camp, and from the memorandum he afterwards elaborated the story which appears in the following pages. When the aged recluse had finished his narration the gloom of night had settled over the still waters, and some of Fordham's servants, accompanied by the malgoozar, came in search of the sahibs who had walked out unattended. Milford had returned after an unsuccessful quest, and was sitting beside Fordham, wondering at the animation shown by the old fakeer, whose rapid sentences, much interlarded with Persian, were somewhat unintelligible to him. The story was ended, and Fordham rose to go before the torch-bearers approached. He promised the old man he would keep his secret till the proper time, and said that if he came to the station he would give him a house to stay in. The aged pilgrim stretched forth his hands over the Englishman's head, and invoked

a blessing; and, turning to Milford, he told him that he was like the young eagle, proud in the strength of his youth, but the words of one who had seen and suffered much in fourscore-and-five years were as the drops of water cherishing the tender plant. He himself had been as brave, and daring, and gallant, and in the pride of his heart had done much evil, and Azazeel had dwelt in his bosom; but Allah had opened his eyes at last. And then he concluded, in almost the words of our own Scriptures, that there were three things that would bring peace at last to both young and old: to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God. So saying the old hermit again stretched forth his hands, and blessed them, and retreated into his chamber, whilst the two Englishmen walked down to meet their attendants.

They left Dongertāl on their return to the higher plateau next day, the weather being too warm for comfort below the ghâts, and on the way back Milford received from his companion the following story founded on the ascetic's narrative.

Early one morning, in the year 1701, as the pearly grey of dawn was giving place to the bright streaks and flashes of carmine and gold which heralded the advent of the sun in the eastern sky, a solitary horseman rode at a foot-pace towards the town of Chappara. He was young, about six or eight and twenty years of age, of frank, open countenance, but with a firm chin and compressed mouth, which, with a sharp piercing eye, told of a daring soul. The young Pathan—for so he was—was attired as a warrior of the time: a steel morion, inlaid with gold of Gujeratee work, with a falling curtain of chain mail, covered his head, and was bound round with a gay scarf. A shirt of chain-mail covered his body, and massive

gauntlets of inlaid steel protected his arms from the wrist to the elbow. A light round black shield, with bosses of polished brass, was slung at his back, and his only offensive weapon was a tulwar, or scimitar, of unusual size and curvature. It was a weapon of which the owner was justly proud, for he was noted for his skill in the use of it. The blade, of the purest Damascene-watered steel, was inlaid on the one side with pious sentences from the Koran, and on the other with the names of his ancestors who had possessed it before him, and to which he hoped some day to add his own with honour.

The horse on which the young warrior rode was a powerful roan, whose looks did not belie his natural viciousness. Power, speed, and endurance were his good qualities, and every sort of equine vice was included in his other attributes. Few could manage him save his rider, and he only by dint of many battles had now established the mastery. The trappings of the horse were plain, but serviceable, and the quilted saddle was of simple red cloth. The only attempt at decoration was the addition of a pair of rosettes at the animal's ears, in the shape of two bright golden flowers of the genda, or African marigold, which the youth had plucked at his last resting-place, and had fastened to the head-stall.

He rode slowly up the ghât at Guneshgunj, and down again on the southern face of the little range, and then he saw the town of Chappara lying before him, with its groves of mango trees, now dotted with the tents of a large camp, for Bukht Buland, the Rajah of Deogurh, was there inspecting the territory which had been recently assigned to him by Narendra Sah, the Gond prince, whom he had assisted in regaining his kingdom.

The ruler of Deogurh was a warlike prince, by birth

a Gond, but a Mahomedan by conversion; in order to consolidate his power he had visited the court of the Mogul emperor at Delhi, and was induced to become a Mussulman. He was a man of great strength of character and energy; and he not only extended his territories by conquest, but improved them by strict attention to order and regularity in his government. Industrious agriculturists from other parts of India were encouraged to settle. Arts and manufactures improved, and all men of ability, whether Hindoos or Mahomedans, found ample patronage at his hands. During his reign Azim Khan of Barha, and Londey Khan of Seonee, or Chownree as it was then called, two Pathan feudatories of Narendra Sah, Rajah of Gurha Mundla, broke out into rebellion against that prince, who was already much weakened by a contest against two usurping cousins, whom he had just overcome. Narendra Sah appealed to Bukht Buland, who, coming to his asssistance, defeated the rebels, who were both slain. Then, in gratitude to his friend for his aid, Narendra Sah gave him the district of Seonee with Kuttunghee and Kerola, and thus it was that Bukht Buland was encamped at Chappara.

On the further side of the river was the camp of the Thakoor of Sulema, who had come to pay his respects to his new lord. The young Pathan's heart beat high at the sight. 'If God willeth it,' said he to himself, 'I will find favour in the sight of Rajah Bukht Buland, and then, if there be war, ho! Allah ho Akbar!' he shouted, shaking his hand aloft as though he brandished his sword, at which the roan plunged and reared twice in the air, without, however, discomposing his rider's seat in the least.

A sound of drums and horns now made the young

soldier look out ahead, and as he approached the town he noticed a gallant cavalcade issuing forth from the camp.

First came runners bearing silver maces, proclaiming aloud the titles of their prince; then a roll of kettle-drums proclaimed the advent of a body of cavalry; then some elephants bearing officers of state, followed by another body of cavalry; then a body of musicians and singers, rehearsing the glories of their lord, preceded a huge tusker elephant, flanked by two lines of horsemen, and from the silver howdah and regal umbrella the young Pathan knew that the short, swarthy man, dressed in simple white, whose attendants fanned him with peacocks' feathers, was none other than Rajah Bukht Buland. Springing from his horse as the rajah passed, the trooper made a low obeisance, and, as the retinue swept past, he vaulted to his saddle, and joined the throng of horsemen that followed.

Bukht Buland, like all warlike chiefs of his time, was passionately fond of the chase, and this grand pageant, which looked like a visit of state, if not a going forth to battle, was nothing else than a hunting party to some hills in the vicinity, in one of which lived an enormous bear, which was the terror of the surrounding villages.

When the hills were reached the drums and heralds were silenced, and the cavalry spread themselves out into the plain on either side, to intercept those animals that might break away. The rajah was posted on his elephant at the most promising spot, and the less likely posts were assigned to his officers. A small body of horse, composed partly of the rajah's and partly of the thakoor's troops, kept a little behind the prince, and the young Pathan boldly joined this group. No questions were asked, for either side took him to be one of the adherents of the other, and as there was no regular

organization, such as exists in modern escort parties, he was safe from detection as an interloper.

The hill was driven by several hundred men, and matters were so arranged that the bear broke out just in front of the rajah.

Now there are many elephants who will stand the fiercest charge by a tiger who have the greatest fear of a bear, and the huge tusker on which Bukht Buland sat was one of these. No sooner did he smell his foe than he got unsteady, and at the roar which answered the prince's shot, the elephant fairly turned tail, in spite of the most strenuous exertions on the part of the mahout to keep him straight, and there was every probability of his taking altogether to flight. The utmost confusion prevailed for some seconds, which the young Pathan quickly took advantage of. Springing from his horse, he unsheathed his heavy blade, and whirling it round his head, he threw himself before the enraged bear. Open-mouthed the savage brute rushed at him, but, uttering a shout of 'Bismillah! al rehman, al ruheem!' the trooper balanced himself for the blow, and as coolly as though he were indulging in some harmless feat of arms delivered a trenchant slash; the bright blade glanced in the sunlight like a flash from a thunder-cloud, and, wielded by a nervous arm, with the peculiar drawing cut of the Indian swordsman, it sheared through the shaggy hair and brawny neck, and a headless body rolled on the ground to the feet of the rajah's elephant.

Calmly wiping his dripping tulwar on the bear's hide, the Pathan returned it to its sheath, and, laying the head before the rajah, made a low salaam. Murmurs of 'Shabash! shabash,' yah Allah! kya khoob!' and the like, reached his ears, but he paid no heed to them.

Then the rajah spoke: 'Who are you?'

'Lord of the universe! your slave is a Pathan, by name Mahomed Taj Khan, a resident of Paniput.'

'Are you in service?'

'Protector of the poor! it is service as a soldier I seek.'

'You are young; have you seen aught of war?'

'My lord, your slave's father fell in battle, and this hand avenged the blow. My grandfather was a leader of horse under the Badshah of Delhi, as his father was before him; their names are engraved on the blade of my sword.'

'One of a race of warriors truly,' remarked Bukht Buland, taking a massive gold chain from his neck and flinging it to the trooper. 'Here, wear this in token of my approbation of your bravery this day, and present yourself in durbar this afternoon to hear our further orders.'

Taj Khan placed the chain round his neck, and, unbelting his sword, he laid it at the elephant's feet, and made a low obeisance to the prince; then resuming his weapon he fell back, and, regaining his horse from a friendly hand, he followed in the wake of the party, an object of general attention and envy.

Bukht Buland was by no means an idle prince. After refreshment and a little rest, he spent some hours with his prime minister and some of the leading men of the place, making enquiries into the state of each section of the district. The tehsildars of each division were in attendance with the canoongoes and putwarrees of their villages, and the fiscal arrangements were gone into with great minuteness. At last the talooqa of Dongertāl was spoken of; it formed the southern boundary of the district, was unproductive and wild—inhabited by Gowlees and Aheers, who were a turbulent set. No, there was no

tehsildar there; the place was jungle, and was subject to inroads from neighbouring chiefs, and bands of lawless robbers. Bukht Buland pondered over this a while and said, 'Clearly this is a post for a soldier and not a tehsildar; let there be an order for a detachment of my Pathan cavalry to be posted at Dongertāl, and I will find a suitable commander.'

The prime minister wrote the order to the fouzdar, or commander of the troops, and the prince sealed it with his signet. After a few more matters the rajah dismissed his council, and retired for a while before the grand durbar. This was held later on in the afternoon, under a large shāmianah, or canopy supported on numerous pillars. The rajah sat on an elevated musnud, or throne, with one or two of his relatives and his principal officers of state near him. On his right sat the thakoor of Sulema; down each side were ranged a crowd of the principal land-owners and petty chiefs of the district, and the officers of the forces there assembled. An officer of the court led up each in turn, calling out their names and titles, if any, and each one presented an offering of gold mohurs; the military men presented their swords laid across both hands, which were touched by the rajah. The principal presentations being over, the prince commanded Taj Khan to be brought.

A murmur of admiration ran round the assembly as the successful young swordsman strode up with a manly, soldier-like bearing, and, kneeling down, gracefully offered his tulwar; Bukht Buland was not content with merely touching it as he did the others, but he took it in his own hands, and drawing the blade scanned it with the eye of a connoisseur.

'It is good water,' said he, using the technical expression, 'and you use it well. You may add your name

to your forefathers' with honour,' he added, returning it to the young man, who put it to his forehead, and then slung it to his belt and retired a pace or two, for a motion from the rajah detained him.

Bukht Buland rose and said in a loud voice :—

'Be it known to all that this brave young Pathan, the son of illustrious fathers, is appointed by us to be commander of our frontier post at Dongertāl, with permission to build there a fort for the protection of our territory, and his salary will be chargeable to the revenues of the said talooqa of Dongertāl so long as Mahomed Taj Khan shall serve us faithfully and well.'

The young trooper, thus raised beyond his highest dreams, was perhaps more astonished than anyone present, but, recovering his presence of mind, he knelt once more and offered his sword, swearing that with heart and hand he would faithfully serve so generous a prince.

And well he redeemed his vow; he governed Dongertāl well, and took for his master the fortress of Sangurhee in the adjoining district of Bhundara, and died there after many years of faithful service.

We must now pass over some years of Taj Khan's life, during which time he allied himself with an influential Pathan family of Pertabgurh, by taking one of the daughters to wife; she bare him sons and ruled his house, for she was a spirited lady, and Taj Khan was more afraid of her than he was of the bear.

One day, as he rode out from his fort at Dongertāl, he passed through a small Gowlee village as a herd of cattle were passing out on their way to their pasture-grounds. At the sight of the approaching horseman they were panic-stricken, and rushed down a narrow by-lane, up which a girl of about seventeen was advancing; as the drove passed her one vicious animal, excited, maybe,

by her red saree, made a rush at her, but the damsel, instead of running away, boldly seized the bullock by the horns, and with a dexterous twist turned it fairly over, and then stood laughing at the success of her exploit.

'Soobhan Allah!' exclaimed Taj Khan, turning his horse down the lane, 'she is fit to be the mother of Samson.'

The girl was handsome, very handsome in the eyes of the Pathan, for she was moon-faced as they call it, with laughing eyes and pearly white teeth, well-rounded limbs which showed an amount of muscular strength quite foreign to the tender plants of the harem. Zuffoora Beebee was skinny compared with this buxom child of nature, and Taj Khan determined to make her his own. It mattered little to the reckless soldier of fortune whether she had a husband or not—Taj Khan knew little of law, except what was written by the point of his sword, and consequently before many days were over Luxmee Baie was the inmate of a small outpost as Taj Khan's second wife. Did not the Koran allow him four wives? then why did he not take her to his own home at Dongertāl? There were several reasons for his not doing so. His first and chief wife, Zuffoora Beebee, was, as we have stated, a lady of determined character, and her husband, fearless as he was, had a wholesome dread of her temper; secondly, he did not wish to offend her family; and, thirdly, he was really in love with the handsome Gowlee girl, who in her turn seemed equally taken with the warlike Pathan, and therefore he had no wish to bring her into contact with Zuffoora, with whom his marriage had been one of self-interest, and whose personal charms were but limited.

In course of time a daughter was born to Luxmee, or, as she was styled since her conversion to the Mahomedan faith, Sultana Beebee; and after a further period her

family was increased by twin sons. It was then that Zuffoora Beebee first found out, from the protracted absence of her lord, what was the state of affairs. She had been deserted, she of a noble Pathan family, for a village girl, and a Kaffir; what did it matter that the other had been converted to Islam? a Kaffir she was, and a Kaffir in Zuffoora Beebee's eyes she would always be. A Kaffir, and a daughter of Kaffirs, a race of pigs!

But the termagant dame did not satisfy herself with invective, she determined to act on the aggressive—but with caution, for, much as Taj Khan feared his wife's tongue, she knew that when roused he was dangerous to meddle with, and so she calmed herself outwardly, which in a woman of Zuffoora's temperament is an ominous sign.

Before two days were over a secret messenger had been despatched to Pertabgurh, to summon an old retainer of her father, who was skilled in puleetas, or charms. Mahomed Khan, her son, was ailing; some one had cast an evil eye on him, and she wanted a taweez, or amulet, for him. On the seventh day the messenger returned, accompanied by a sinister-looking little old man, in whose shrivelled countenance were written sordid avarice and low cunning. In those superstitious days he was considered a man of learning, and was feared and respected by the stalwart warriors around him, who would otherwise have treated his misshapen little body with contempt. He had been born a retainer of Zuffoora Beebee's family, and was a confidant of most of the family secrets, some of which were dark enough.

On his arrival at the fort, which was so timed as to be during the master's absence, he was ushered at once into Zuffoora Beebee's presence, and, when they were alone, the angry dame poured forth the story of her wrongs, and her desire for revenge.

'But what can your slave do, gracious lady?' asked the old man with a cunning leer.

'Do!' stormed the Beebee; 'do! did I send for you here to ask me what to do? Do your worst, man! Are not devils and demons subservient to your will? Kill that accursed woman, that Kaffir, and send demons into her children—that is what you must do; and then,' continued she in a milder tone, 'if you succeed, Meeah, I will fill your hands with gold, and make you rich.'

'But the master, what will he do when he finds out what I have caused?'

'Get out, Meeah Jān, for a cowardly loon! who is to tell him? and if he *does* hear, Taj Khan, brave soldier as he is, fears a demon as much as any of them, and he dare not touch you.'

'I shall want some earth out of a grave before I begin.'

'Well, go to the kuburistan beyond the lake; you will find what you want there.'

The earth obtained, Zuffoora Beebee and the old man shut themselves up in a room by themselves, and, dividing the mould into two portions, the sorcerer proceeded to make clay of one share, and with this he formed a small figure in the shape of a woman, about a span in length. Then he made twenty-one thin wooden splinters, or pegs, over which he read the Soora-i-tubut, or 111th chapter of the Koran, backwards three times, on which he proceeded to stick the figure full of splinters from head to foot; having done this he shrouded it in the manner prescribed for burial, and gave it to Zuffoora Beebee, with instructions to bury it in the name of her rival, who would sicken and die. Then, taking the rest of the earth, he bared his head, and repeated the Feel, or Soora-i-allum turkeef, the 105th chapter of the Koran, forty-one times,

over it, and, delivering it to his mistress, charged her to throw it on or in the way of the twin sons, or on their house, and that they, instead of loving each other as twins generally do, would have throughout life the most inveterate hatred, which would descend to their children and cause endless sorrow. Once more he took up the earth and cried—

'O avenger! O great one! O Isra-eel! we have raised up enmity and hatred between them till the day of resurrection!'

Zuffoora Beebee did not sleep long over her vengeance. The figure was buried in their private cemetery in the name of Sultana Beebee, and she found means of sprinkling the children with the earth over which the curse had been pronounced. All that Zuffoora Beebee desired came to pass. Sultana Beebee died within the year, and the twins were perpetually quarrelling. Taj Khan, on the death of his favourite wife, plunged into war, and stormed and took the fort of Sangurhee, where he lived and died, not caring to return to Dongertāl. Oosman Khan and Oomrao Khan, the twin brothers, after showing the greatest animosity towards each other, took service with opposing princes, and, after many years in which they both gained distinction, they met in battle and attacked each other with such fury that both fell mortally wounded.

There then remained of the unfortunate Sultana Beebee's family two grandsons, Khan Mahomed Khan, whose father, Oosman Khan, had been made a nawab, and endowed with considerable property by the Mahratta prince in whose service he had entered, and Mudar Khan, the son of the other twin brother, Oomrao Khan, who served under the Nizam of the Deccan. Besides these there was Sitara, the granddaughter of Sultana

Beebee, the only child of her daughter Fatima, now a girl of fifteen years of age. Sitara had inherited all her grandmother's beauty, softened and improved by the admixture of the high-bred Pathan blood. Sultana Beebee's beauty had been of the Amazonian type; Sitara Beebee's was of a more delicate and refined nature. Both her cousins were anxious to marry her, and she, unfortunately, was the means of prolonging the family feud. Sitara's own inclinations led her to the young nawab, Khan Mahomed Khan. He was handsome and brave; the *beau idéal* of a gallant *sabreur*, a worthy descendant of his grandfather Taj Khan; he was reckless and wild, it is true, but he was brave and generous, and all men spoke well of him, all indeed but his cousin Mudar Khan, and he hated him with a fiendish hate. Mudar Khan had the bravery without the redeeming qualities of the other; he was noted for his savage cruelty and vindictiveness, and many a dark tale was told of him. No wonder, then, he looked like the fallen Eblis, the Prince of Evil, as he stood one day with clenched teeth and hands, gazing, with hatred gleaming out of his eyes, at a letter from a confidential agent, stating that his overtures of marriage to his cousin Sitara Beebee had been rejected, and that his rival, Khan Mahomed Khan, was the favoured suitor.

In the meantime the marriage ceremonies, which amongst the wealthy nobles are protracted for many days, were going on. The horoscope of the young couple had been cast, but the wise men were much puzzled about it; an ominous sign appeared at the commencement, and troubles to follow, which would have been sufficient to deter the marriage for a season, did not the subsequent signs show a cessation of hostility and advent of peace as regarded the bridegroom, but the bride's fate was not clear. The moollas shook their heads over it, but the

eldest of them advised his brethren to let things go on, and leave their kismut in the hands of Allah, the disposer of events. Good, it was apparent, was to come out of evil, and who were they, creatures of earth, to withstand the Almighty decrees? So the arrangements went on.

There was a little garden in front of the women's apartments in the fort, and the wall of the bastion went sheer down into the river. One afternoon, before her lover was expected, Sitara Beebee went out into this garden, and leaning over the low wall was dreamily looking at the rippling waters, when a young man in a plain and almost menial dress, one who might have been taken for a groom, led down the opposite bank of the stream a splendid black horse, whose trappings, all covered with gold and jewels, showed that he was the charger of some warlike prince. The young man gazed eagerly at Sitara, but the horse, which was tired and thirsty, plunged his nostrils into the stream and began to drink. The little fishes, which in some parts of India are very tame, and were so especially at this place, owing to the existence of a Hindoo shrine on the river-side, and their being fed regularly by the priests and devotees, kept jumping at the bright tassels of pearls which dangled from the charger's ears, and made him snort and plunge.

Instead of trying to pacify the frightened animal the young stranger petulantly tore off the offending pearls and flung them into the stream, so that the horse might drink in peace, and he not be disturbed in his admiration of the slight girlish figure on the bastion.

Sitara Beebee was too much absorbed in her reverie, as she watched the wavelets lapping against the stone wall of the fort, to notice this little episode, but the sharp eyes of a favourite slave girl saw the action of tearing off the gems, and she immediately exclaimed—

'My lady! that is no common man, no ordinary groom. Would the slave dare to throw away his master's pearls? No, that is a prince in disguise, and, oh, how handsome he is!'

Sitara, who had noticed the horse more than the man, now perceived the stranger's eyes fixed upon her, and, blushing deeply, she retired to her own apartments at once.

Mudar Khan, for the pretended syce was no other than the disappointed suitor, led his horse back to where he had left a few attendants, and taking from them a white dove and a hawk, he rode slowly back to the river-side. Here he attached a small piece of paper to the dove's neck and threw it in the air, and as it sped across the river he sent the hawk at it; the poor dove finding itself pursued darted down into the shrubbery of orange, harsinga, and jessamine bushes, which formed the garden of the zenana. Sitara Beebee rushed out to save the fluttering bird, and carried it into her room, where she discovered the note.

Every girl is curious and loves adventure, so she eagerly undid the string and opened the paper. It was a passionate appeal to her, saying how much he loved her, a thousand times more than that dastardly cur, Khan Mahomed, who would flee like a hound at the flash of his sabre. Let Sitara Beebee only see him, and she would know whom to choose. Why did she give herself up like a lamb to the slaughterers? He, Mudar Khan, had a beautiful estate and many followers; he stood high in favour with his prince. All that he had should be Sitara's—jewels and fine clothes, summer-houses and gardens; no queen was ever treated as she should be. Let her think no more of Khan Mahomed; she had only to go and offer prayers and alms on the grave of their common grandmother,

Sultana Beebee, and he would be in ambush with a troop of horse to carry her off, and a moolla ready to marry them. If she assented she was to liberate once more the white pigeon, and then he would know what to do.

Sitara's breast heaved with anger and her eyes flashed as she read this impudent appeal, and, rushing out once more on the bastion, she tore the letter into fragments in his sight and flung the shreds into the river; then turning, she fled again into the house and wept bitterly.

Mudar Khan ground his teeth as he saw the action he read so well, and he thirsted for revenge as he rode off. Bidding his attendants meet him at a certain village, he rode slowly, and by himself, into the jungle; there was a well-defined cattle track, and, as soon as his people were out of sight, Mudar Khan pressed his horse to a gallop. Half an hour's riding brought him to the foot of some rocky hills, and, here dismounting, he tied his horse to a tree, and, making his way up a steep path, he soon found himself in front of the mouth of a cave, in which a rude wooden door had been fixed. Striking fiercely on this with the hilt of his tulwar till the rickety barrier threatened to give way, he shouted—

'Are you sleeping, oh, master! or have some of your familiar spirits flown away with you?'

'Blaspheme not, Mudar Khan,' replied a hollow voice, as a wild, long-haired, wild-eyed old man, clad in the garb of a fakeer, appeared at the entrance. 'Why do you seek me again? Did I not tell you I could do nothing for you? The fates are against you. What is written in your tukdeer must come to pass; I cannot alter it.'

'Old man,' savagely answered the fiery Pathan, striding a pace towards him, and shaking his clenched fist in his face, 'none of your sophistries for me. I will not be put off with assertions from your lying lips, and if my

grandfather, Taj Khan himself, were to rise from the grave, I would not take his answer. Call your spirits, bad or good, and I will ask of them!'

'Rash youth,' rejoined the ascetic, 'hast thou courage to face the spirits of the dead? Taj Khan himself shall tell thee thy fate.'

'Lead on, lead on,' shouted the impetuous soldier; 'to Eblis, the lord of evil, himself will I sell myself, rather than forego my vengeance.'

'Enter then,' replied the hermit; 'enter, rest, and eat, for thy spirits must not quail at what thou seest.'

'Quail, old man! the word is unknown to a Pathan and a soldier.'

'Ay, ay, that is all very well, but the demons I raise will make the stoutest heart quail sometimes. Here, sit you down whilst I get you some water to wash your hands with, and then eat.'

The place they were in was a cave the size of a moderate room. At one end hung a curtain; a rude basin and ewer stood in a corner, and a bed of dry branches formed the sleeping-place of the fakeer. There was not a particle of comfort of any kind, and, save for the curtain and ewer, the place might have been the den of a wild boar.

Having placed the basin before his guest, and poured water over his hands, the hermit retired behind the curtain, whence the Khan could hear certain mumblings and mutterings. In a short time the old man reappeared with a tray, on which there was a smoking pilao, and several dishes of meats and confectionery.

'What is all this tomfoolery for?' surlily asked Mudar Khan; 'do you think I came here to feast?'

'Eat,' replied the fakeer, curtly.

'Eat, indeed,' grumbled the soldier, on whom the

savoury smell of the viands began to make some impression; 'eat, indeed! You are a nice, luxurious old sybarite, to turn out such dinners as these; they don't seem to do you much good though, and doubtless you have a fair cook behind yon curtain!'

'Peace, idle babbler!' returned the old man, sternly; 'eat and be thankful thou hast food, and ask not whence it comes; there is no other human soul besides ourselves within many miles, and parched peas and water are all that pass my lips.'

'Bismillah!' answered the reckless Pathan; 'be the devil your cook or not, this pilao is first-rate, and the kawabs are worthy of the chief of his highness the Nizam's bawurchees.'

The dinner ended, the hermit removed the tray, and told his guest to wash and say his prayers. Mudar Khan did so, and went through the prescribed genuflexions, and when he had made an end he found the old man waiting, and beckoning him to follow.

Passing under the curtain the Khan found himself in a vast cavern. What the extent was he could not make out, for the only light was that emitted from a brazier, placed on the floor a few feet from the entrance. There was a cold damp air, and, as the bats noiselessly flitted about, the weird aspect of the place struck a chill to the heart of the young soldier, who, till then, had been a stranger to fear.

Checking his usual ribaldry he attentively watched the old hermit, who was busy drawing with great exactitude certain geometrical figures on the floor in the centre of which he placed himself and his guest with the brazier of charcoal. In each section of the figure were written invocations in the Arabic character and certain numbers.

Motioning to his companion to keep strict silence, the fakeer began to read rapidly sentences in the Arabic tongue, casting at the same time spices and perfumes on the brazier, raising a thick cloud of smoke. Then he cried with a loud voice—

'Oh! be present! be present! kings of genii, Buktanoos and Dukheeanoos!—Hooleanoos and Tarnoos! By the oath of Solomon the son of David, I adjure you. By the aid of Jibraeel, Meekaeel, Isra-eel, and Israfeel, I command you. Be present, be present!'

Leaving his guest kneeling, the ascetic had risen to his full height, and now stood with his arms stretched forth above his head. The smoke of the brazier seemed to eddy round and round till it formed a dark spiral column, from the centre of which lurid flashes of light occasionally broke forth.

'It is well that thou hast come, O Jinn! hie thee hence and summon the spirit of Taj Khan.'

The column seemed to dissolve and thick smoke rolled over the place again, whilst the hermit went on rapidly repeating invocations, ending with another cry of 'Yah! Israeel-o! yah Hazir-o! be present! be present!'

The smoke gradually cleared away from the centre, which got brighter and brighter, and a dim form appeared of an aged warrior in full armour on horseback. Clearer and clearer it became, till the stern eyes seemed to pierce into the young Pathan's soul. The face had a sad and a reproving expression. The soldier shaded his eyes as he looked on the form of his martial grandsire.

'Speak to him,' said the hermit, in hollow tones; 'speak to him; he will not speak to thee.'

The young man's tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, he could not speak. At last with a convulsive effort, more like a wailing cry, he burst forth with—

THE INVOCATION.

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'Sitara! my cousin Sitara!'

The vision mournfully shook its head.

'Shall I accomplish my vengeance then?' he continued, in a hoarse whisper.

The vision shook its head again.

'Is Khan Mahomed to possess her?'

Again the vision shook its head, with an increased sadness of expression, at which Mudar Khan sprang up with a joyful shout, when a low deep voice seemed to come from the vision, saying—

'Khan Mahomed's end shall be peace, and he shall be blessed of Allah, for he shall rid himself of the curse.'

The next instant the figure had disappeared, and the old fakeer was prostrate on the earth. The brazier went out and all was utter darkness. The usually brave young Pathan was quite unnerved and trembling; he had learnt for the first time what fear was.

After a while the hermit rose, and, taking his guest by the hand, led him back into the first cave, and through it to the doorway.

'Go thy ways, Mudar Khan,' said he with haggard face and trembling voice; 'go thy ways. We shall never meet again. Taj Khan had assuredly not been visible to thee had not the angel Isra-eel set his seal on thy brow. Forego thy schemes of vengeance, and live the last of thy days with charity in thy heart, so that thou mayest find peace at last. There has been a curse on thy house, but it is nearly over, and one of the race of Taj Khan and Sultana Beebee is to break it. Be thou that one; give up the thoughts of vengeance, mend thy ways, give up thy cousin Sitara, and thine enmity to Khan Mahomed, and it shall be well with thee.'

'Never!' hissed the young warrior, 'never! Isra-eel may have marked me as the woodman marks the forest

tree, but if I fall others shall fall and perish with me; it is my fate—be it so!'

Thus saying he strode down the path, and, regaining his horse, galloped off.

It is not necessary to weary the reader with an account of the protracted ceremonies, extending over many days, of a wealthy Mahomedan's marriage. Everything on this occasion was done with great magnificence, and when the kazee offered up the customary prayer at the conclusion of the legal part of the ceremony, which ran thus:

'Yah Allah! the great! the munificent! grant that mutual love may exist between this couple as it did between Adam and Huwa, Ibraham and Sara, Moosa and Sufoora, his highness Mahomed Moostaffa and Aaysha, and his highness Ali ul Moortooza and Fatimat oos Zohura!' all the people cried, 'Ameen! Ameen!'

At last the time came for the young nawab to take his bride home, and a gallant cavalcade set out. A body of picked cavalry escorted the bride's litter, and the young Khan rode beside it. Sitara's female attendants were borne in other litters behind, whilst elephants and camels were laden with tents and camp equipage.

They had travelled some distance through a wild forest country, when the road entered a narrow defile through which they were marching, heedless of enemies, for the surrounding country was at peace save for bands of Pindarees, and Khan Mahomed's force, he considered, was quite sufficient to overawe these marauders. But all at once a yell burst from a thousand throats, and volleys of matchlock balls rained on the luckless marriage party from every side, whilst a body of horse, led by a warrior on a black charger, bore fiercely down upon them.

The young nawab drew his sword, and, heading his men, rushed to meet the foe. Men and horses fell in all directions to rise no more. War-cries, curses, and yells mingled with the clash of steel, and the work of slaughter went on. Khan Mahomed had never seen his cousin before, and he attacked the leader on the black horse with the utmost impetuosity, but at the same time with his temper more under command than was the case with Mudar Khan, who, seeing his hated rival before him, rushed at him with the blind ferocity of the wild boar. But he met his match; there were few swordsmen who could equal the young nawab, who was skilled not only in the sabre practice of the Indians, but who had learnt the European art of fence from a Frenchman in the Mahratta service, and could consequently combine the excellences of both systems; therefore, in preference to the scimitar-shaped tulwar, he used a broad and straighter blade, reputed to be of Spanish origin. Consequently, after parrying and returning some of the fiercer cuts, he received on his blade a blow in which Mudar Khan had concentrated all his strength, and, dropping the point, he drove his straight sword through the other's throat, who fell heavily from his horse. The loss of their leader dispirited his followers, and they were speedily in flight, closely pursued by the nawab's troops. Khan Mahomed sprang from his horse, and sternly asked the dying man who he was.

'Dog!' hissed the fallen soldier, 'dog, and the son of a dog! I am Mudar Khan, the son of Oomrao Khan!' and he threw his head back, and expired with hatred still gleaming out of his eyes.

'Ya Soobhan!' exclaimed the horror-struck chief; 'I have slain my brother, the son of my uncle, yet, Thou

knowest I knew him not, and he hated me with bitter hate. Truly the curse on Sultana Beebee followeth her descendants. Oh, unfortunate one! what led thee to pursue thy fate to this bitter end? Was there not room in the world for us both?'

Here piercing shrieks from Sitara's attendants recalled the young Pathan's attention from his foe, and he flew to the side of her litter, but alas! more and keener grief was in store for him, and nature could bear no more, and he fell senseless by her side.

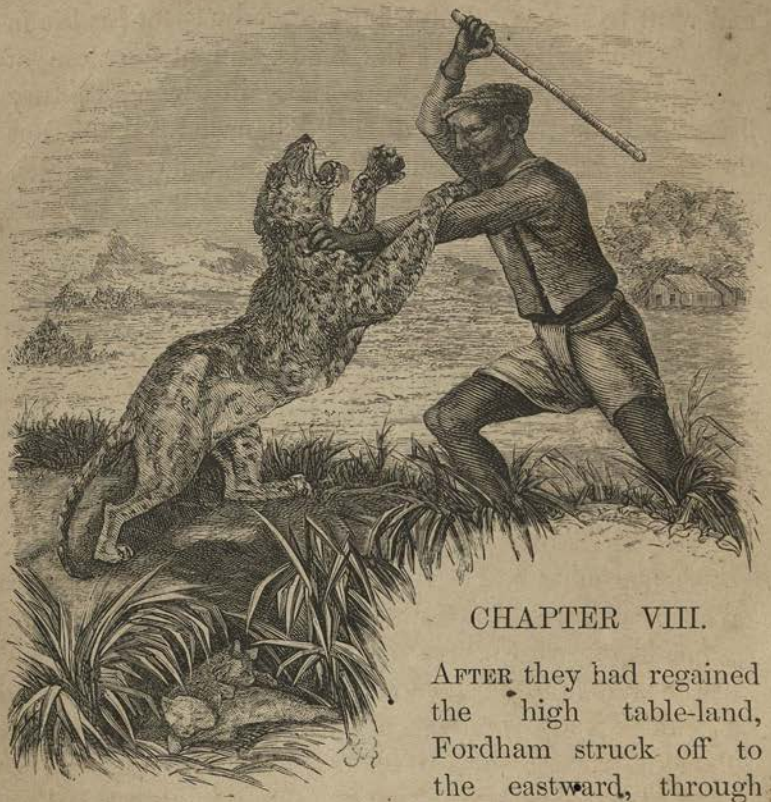
Sitara was dead! a stray bullet had penetrated the crimson velvet hangings of her litter, and had pierced her heart, and she lay as though asleep. In this state her attendants had found her, when, seeing she made no sign, or answered when they spoke, they ventured to open her curtains.

Our story now draws to a close. The wedding march was turned into a funeral one; and wailing and mourning took the place of joyful music, songs, and the twinkling feet of dancing girls.

Khan Mahomed, when he came to himself, gave not way to idle lamentations; he sternly hushed the wailing and weeping, and made the procession fall in again. He ordered the body of Mudar Khan to be made over to his own people by the hands of such prisoners as were taken; then he made forced marches to his own fort, where Sitara Beebee was buried with great pomp, and a beautiful tomb built over her, with a mosque and imāmbāra attached to it. Here he located pious men learned in the faith, and entered himself as a disciple. When the work was completed he renounced his lands and retainers in favour of a half-brother of Sitara Beebee, whom he made his heir, and, endowing various mosques and shrines with his vast personal wealth, he donned the habit of a fakeer,

and went to Mecca. Returning thence he spent his life in visiting the shrines of all the saints, and at the close of life crept back to die in the chamber in which a century before Zuffoora, the wife of Taj Khan, had worked out the evil which had rested on his house from generation to generation.

SAMBUR HORNS.



CHAPTER VIII.

After they had regained the high table-land, Fordham struck off to the eastward, through the talooqa of Durasee, where he wished to inspect the iron-works at Agree and Pukhara. The process of manufacture, as carried on by the natives, is very rude; the ore, which consists of hæmatitic iron in nodules, is found principally on the surface, and undergoes a preliminary roasting before it is broken up for the furnace; it is then reduced to a gravel. The furnace is a rude, blunt-pointed cone of clay, about four feet in height, with a hollow centre; this is filled with charcoal, and combustion is kept up by a pair of concertina-like bellows, working one in each hand of the operator, the nozzles being stuck through a lump of wet clay, closing an

aperture in the side of the furnace. One man works the bellows, whilst a second, or a woman, feeds the furnace with charcoal and a handful at a time of pounded ore. After a while an iron rod is thrust through the clay, and the molten ore pours out through the hole. The crude lump of iron thus obtained is heated and hammered into a rough block, which is cleft by a wedge to show the quality of the metal, and in this state it is sold in the markets.

In riding through the dense bamboo jungle that clothes the southern and eastern slopes of the Satpura range, our friends had the unpleasant experience, not uncommon in the hot weather, of a burning forest. Any time between March and June sights may be seen in the Seonee and adjacent districts which remind the beholder of the accounts he has read of prairies on fire in America. The spear-grass, which grows during the cold season to a height of two to three feet over the undulating plains of the table-lands, becomes, by the month of March, as dry as tinder, and when set on fire by the Gonds, or by a chance spark, a sheet of flame, driven by the westerly wind, races across the country and affords a striking spectacle, especially at night.

The travellers found themselves in rather an awkward predicament, as the flames swept onward towards them, licking up the dead leaves, twigs, and dry grass, and darting with snaky curves up the bamboos, which, as the fire heated the air contained in each joint, went off with a succession of loud reports, till one might almost have fancied oneself under a heavy fire of small-arms. The horses were greatly alarmed, and the consequences might have been serious, had not the Gond guide hurried them on to a place where the road passed between high banks, and here they were safe from flame and smoke, which

swept over their heads. There was nothing to be done but to wait for a while, till the line of fire passed their road, and, as they were secure from any danger, they watched the progress of the conflagration with interest.

There was a lack of one element of excitement which exists in the burning prairies of America, viz. the wild rush of terrified beasts; here certainly birds flew screaming before the flames, mostly parrots and jungle-fowl, the bun-moorgh, or *Gallus ferrugineus*, a bird similar to, and supposed to be the parent stock of, the common domestic fowl. Milford at first felt inclined to use his smooth-bore, as bird after bird whirred over their heads, but a better feeling came over him, and he thought it would be cruel to take a mean advantage, as they were flying for their lives. But a fresh excitement came into play as a small animal about the size of a hare came rushing out before the flames, and tumbled down the steep bank. A Gond was about to hurl his ever-ready little axe at it, but Fordham caught his arm, and before the little creature recovered from its bewilderment a horse-blanket was thrown over it, and it was secured alive. It was one of those curious little creatures—the smallest of the deer tribe—the *Memimna indica*, or mouse-deer; the most fragile-looking, dainty little Liliputian, bearing the same relation to the lordly elk as the tiny humming-bird does to the hornbill. The mouse-deer belongs to the hornless family of musk-deer, and is the most diminutive of all ruminants; its weight hardly exceeds that of a hare, and its height is from ten to twelve inches only. In colour it is brownish, or, as Dr. Jerdon describes it, olivaceous, mixed with yellow-grey, white below, and the sides streaked and spotted with yellowish white; its limbs are excessively slender, and it trips along most daintily on the tips of its toes. Its motions are scarcely as graceful

as one would expect from one of the deer tribe, for owing, perhaps, to its shape, the hind quarters being higher than the fore, it has a poky, piggish way of going about; if it had only the carriage of the stag or the antelope, a more fairy-like, airy little creature could not be conceived. Fordham had two of them at Seonee in his collection; they were tame enough to run about the house, and were great pets One had recently fallen a victim to a stray Pariah dog, and the present little captive was destined to supply the place of the lost one.

The flames having passed their line of march the journey was resumed. Here and there a solitary bang of a heated bamboo joint would startle their horses, but the heat and the smoke were over, and they could once more travel in comparative comfort.

Milford noticed the Gond guide examining with care a split bamboo now and then, occasionally assisting the cleavage by a blow from his axe.

'What is he doing?' asked he of his companion.

'Looking for *buns lochun*,' replied Fordham; 'it is a curious crystalline deposit in the joints of some bamboos, which is highly prized by the natives as a febrifuge, equal, some assert, to quinine. He is a queer-looking little fellow, that Gond; have you noticed those deep scars on his neck?—regular pit-holes—there, see as he bends over that bamboo. I'll warrant he has had a narrow escape from some wild beast. Here, Moula, you ask him how he got those scars.'

'From a tiger, khodawund, but I'll tell him to describe how it was. Hi! Sirdaree! the sahib wants to know how you got away from the tiger that carried off the telee.'

The little man grinned with delight at the chance

thus afforded of recounting his prowess, and as he passed his hand over the back of his neck, he said—

'I never killed but one tiger, maharaj, but that was a tiger; he was an Adam-khor, an eater of men.'

Well, the gist of the little shikaree's story was, that his father had left him a legacy of a matchlock of such weight and length that he could not level it without a rest, or fire it except in a sitting posture. However, he had with his weapon gained a certain reputation in his part of the country as a killer of wild pigs and deer, and earned a fair livelihood as a hunter, but he had not ventured to try his fortune with the more savage beasts.

As time wore on, a tiger commenced his career as a man-eater on a small ghât leading from the plateau to a much-frequented market town in the Kuttunghee valley, and for a time the road was closed except to travellers in large bodies, who, with drums and trumpets, marched down during the daytime. A large reward had been offered for the destruction of the tiger, and this induced our friend Sirdaree to go in search of him, with other hunters, who were likewise ambitious of distinguishing themselves. At last an opportunity occurred. A certain telee, or dealer in oil, had been down to the weekly market, and was doubtless so absorbed in counting his gains that he forgot all about the dreaded man-eater, and lagged behind the rest of his fellow-travellers, who marched in a compact body. His calculations were rudely cut short by the tiger, who pounced upon him and carried him off shrieking, regardless of the yells and shouts raised by the unfortunate man's comrades. At the next roadside village the piteous tale was told, and our little friend Sirdaree happening to be there shouldered his long matchlock, and went off at once on the trail. He was not wanting in courage, small as was the body that

contained his big heart, and he tracked the tiger to his lair, where he was devouring his victim. Sirdaree, undismayed by the horrid spectacle, coolly squatted down, adjusted his weapon on its rest, and, taking a steady aim at the tiger's forehead, fired. The bullet sped to the mark, but the stricken tiger, springing at his assailant before he had time to rise, pinned him to the ground, and, burying his fangs in the shikaree's neck, expired on his prostrate body. Assistance was at hand, and the mouth of the tiger had to be prized open with a bamboo before the unfortunate hunter could be released. He was carried home, and for a long time hovered betwixt life and death, but simple remedies, backed up by a healthy constitution, prevailed, and the little man lives to be proud of his victory and to exhibit his scars.

'There seems to be much courage shown at times by natives in their adventures with tigers,' remarked Milford.

'Yes,' replied Fordham; 'we talk much of our exploits with our double-barrelled rifles and elephants, but our deeds are often put to shame by the shikaree with his single arm and rusty matchlock, and he will do most daring things at times. I remember once a woodcutter disturbed a tiger, which sprang at him open-mouthed. The man forced a pole he had in his hands into the brute's open jaws, and called lustily for assistance, when a comrade standing by, seeing the tiger was at a momentary disadvantage, rushed up and drove his axe to the eye in the brain of the animal. On another occasion I was in the Kuttunghee pergunnah, when a villager brought a fine female panther into my camp for the reward. I noticed that the man was scratched and his coat torn, and that the panther had several spear wounds, so asked him how he had killed it. His story was, that he had gone out early in the morning to see if his rice

crop was ready to cut, and in walking along the grassy bund he was suddenly attacked by the panther. Luckily for him, as the weather was cold—it was in November—he had put on a *meerzaie*, or jacket thickly wadded with cotton, and this, in some measure, protected him from the creature's claws. His only weapon was a bamboo walking-stick, and this he laid on with such good-will that the animal was fain to let go and beat a retreat. For most men this would have been enough, but it was not for my friend, who, returning to his house, armed himself with a spear, and, taking a couple of dogs, set out again in quest of the panther, this time determined to be the aggressor. The dogs helped him to find her again, and as she came out at him he gallantly met her half way, and speared her through the heart, and followed up his attack by a series of thrusts, which soon deprived his enemy of life. She was almost warm when brought into my camp, and the man's scratches were still bleeding. She had cubs in the grass which made her fierce.'

'Old Sheykha tells me he had a hand-to-hand struggle with a panther,' said Milford.

'So he had, and a long time the old fellow was before he got over the effects of his scrimmage; it was a case of knife *versus* teeth and claws, and the panther nearly had the best of it.'

'They give ugly wounds, don't they?'

'A panther's wound generally festers, at least that is the common impression. It is supposed that the virus from putrid carcases—for he is not a dainty feeder—gets into the claws and poisons the wounds; but the same argument should apply to tigers, for they are by no means clean feeders, and often prefer an excessively high bit of an old kill to a fresh young buffalo calf. But the shock to the nervous system is greater with the tiger,

and often proves fatal where the wound is by no means mortal. I have known cases where even an unwounded man has died from sudden fright at a tiger knocking a comrade down at his side; the injured man was all right after a few strips of plaster had been applied, but the poor, nervous fellow at his side, who was not touched, died from sheer fright. That men of strong constitutions recover after getting the most serious wounds is a fact proved by the existence of such men as little Sirdaree here and Soma the Lebhana, but a man of weakly, nervous habit is as likely to succumb from the shock as from the actual bodily hurt; and, when one considers the immense power of the tiger, it is not a matter of surprise that the nervous system should receive irreparable injury. The wonder to me is that men so far retain their senses as to be able to fight and get away after being struck down.'

'Still there is much exaggeration,' said Milford, 'in the accounts one hears of the strength of tigers. Have you ever seen a cow's skull, let alone a buffalo's, fractured by a blow of the paw?'

'No, never; nor do I believe in its being possible. Men's skulls I have seen smashed by a blow, but not a cow's; in fact they do not attempt it. The usual way is to rush at the animal and bear it to the ground, when, with a sudden wrench, the vertebræ of the neck are dislocated. I was once close to two cows when a tiger struck them down, and in each case the neck was broken with a snap like a dry stick.'

Sirdaree here pointed, with great excitement, to a small object cautiously moving about in a thicket on the other side of a nullah to their left, and whispered, 'Chousingha!'

Fordham carefully raised his rifle and fired, and the

little shikaree, plunging into the jungle, soon returned dragging out the carcass of a four-horned antelope.

'That is a fine specimen,' remarked Fordham, as he examined it carefully; 'very often the anterior horns are merely a slight knob, but these, you see, are well developed, and over an inch in length. General Hardwicke made a strange mistake when he called this animal *antelopus chikara*, the chikara being the gazelle; and great confusion has since arisen regarding the two. However, the specific name, *quadricornis*, is now universally adopted. In fact naturalists are by no means infallible creatures, and though fewer mistakes are made now than formerly, still the standard works are full of errors.'

Whilst they were talking a pair of rocket birds flew past, with their long white tails streaming like ribbons after them. As Milford was particularly desirous of getting specimens of these birds, he hastily withdrew the shot from one of his guns, substituting a smaller size, and went off in pursuit, and after much labour and many scratches he secured both—one a fine white bird, with a tail sixteen inches long, the other a young male, in a transition state from chestnut to pure white. This Milford showed to Fordham, and asked him if it were a hybrid.

'No,' replied he; 'the young male has a black head like the rest, but light-chestnut back and wings. Now your bird has just reached the transition stage. You see that some of the primary wing feathers are turning white; gradually the whole bird will assume that colour. Is it not so, Moula?' continued he, turning to the Lalla.

'Yes, khodawund. The Mahomedans have a story about this bird,' that at one time it was one of the most beautiful of birds in Paradise, with twelve long white

plumes, and a lovely voice, and it was a special favourite of Allah; but it was of a proud and envious disposition, so, to give it a lesson, it was brought into contact with the real bird of Paradise. Instead, however, of being humiliated, it went up to Allah with a complaint that it was not sufficiently beautiful, that there was already another more gaily attired bird. Then Allah got angry and turned his face from the envious shah bulbúls, and he gave sentence against them—that, as they had shown an evil spirit, and had blackened their faces before him, they should lose all their spotless plumes and become dingy-brown little birds, with black heads, but that after a period of humiliation they should be allowed to resume their white garb, with only two of their cherished tail plumes, but their faces were to remain black for ever, they were never to change. So the shah bulbul was banished from Paradise, and flits about in the lonely bamboo forests, doing penance for its sin. Its sweet voice is gone, and a harsh, grating cry is all it can make.'

'Hard lines for the poor bird,' said Milford, as the Lalla finished his story; 'however, I'll jot that legend down for the benefit of enquiring friends at home.'

It was late when they got to camp, but there was more trouble in store for them. Only one tent was pitched, and, on Fordham enquiring the reason, the old jemadar of chapprassees came forward and said that they had put up one tent as silently as they could, but that, if he might be permitted to advise, the huzoor had better order the camp to march a little further, for in a large cotton tree close by was a bees' nest, and it might be dangerous to remain.

Milford felt inclined to laugh at the old man, and was rather surprised at Fordham's taking it so gravely.

'Why,' said he, 'what's the harm of a bees' nest? what would these people think of a cottage at home with half a dozen hives in the garden?'

'My dear boy,' replied his companion, 'absurd as it may seem to you, I am afraid we must march on; a jungle bees' nest is no trifling matter, and though the insect may be an insignificant one by itself, still an attack by thousands of them is fatal to man and beast. I have known horses as well as men stung to death by them, and a whole camp put to flight. Go up cautiously to yon semul tree and look at the comb. Stay, I'll go with you.'

They walked up to the tree, which, like most of the species, shot up like a gigantic column for about fifty feet before it threw out branches. A decided humming noise could be heard as they neared the place, and as they looked up Milford saw a black mass, about six or seven feet in diameter, high up in the branches. It was a gigantic comb and no mistake; he could hardly believe his eyes.

'Those bees,' said Fordham, 'are the most vindictive little brutes in existence if meddled with, and show the greatest animosity in pursuing their disturbers. To fire a shot into that comb now would cost us our lives, and therefore it is always well to let them alone. I am going to march a couple of miles further, where good shade and water are to be found; for though we might stay here safely by ourselves, still in a large camp there are always thoughtless men, who might enrage these pugnacious mites, and then it would be a case of *sauve qui peut.*'

So, in spite of the heat, they had to trudge on for another two miles, and pitched their tent under a fine old banyan tree. There were some loose boulders lying about the place, mostly about the size of a cocoa-nut,

and some larger; the exterior seemed more crystalline than the ordinary trap boulder of the Seonee plateau, so Milford took one up, as they were sitting under the tree waiting for the tent to be put up, and, after examining it for a few minutes, he thought it might be an agate pebble, and dashed it against another to break it. To his astonishment it flew into three pieces, and disclosed most beautiful crystals of amethystine quartz. These geodes, as geologists term them, are common in the quartz formations of the district, and some of them are most beautiful. Fortification and moss agates are found in the same locality, and a pearly-white semi-opal, which cuts into very pretty ornaments. The native lapidaries on the banks of the Nerbudda cut these agates and bloodstones into ornaments and knife-handles, and used to drive a thriving trade.

At last the tent was up, and Chand Khan had got a hasty breakfast ready, and glad were the tired travellers to rest themselves for the remainder of the day.

In the evening they witnessed a Gondian marriage feast, in which roast pig and strong mouhwa spirit figured largely. As Jacob served Laban for his wives, so the Gondian youth has to serve the father of his chosen for a fixed period, often for years, before he has worked out his claim to his wife. Of course amongst the wealthier Gonds the custom is either nominal or omitted altogether.

The next day found them on their way back to Seonee through the beautiful Dullal valley. They were obliged to leave the Lalla behind, for he had been trying experiments *in corpore vili*, which had resulted in extreme discomfort to him, and might have been more serious.

There is a tree common in the district, and indeed throughout India, the *Semecarpus anacardium*, called by the natives bhela or bhelawun; it belongs to the cashew-

nut tribe, and the fruit is chiefly known to Europeans as the marking-nut, as its black acrid juice is employed in marking cloth, and is indelible, especially if fixed with quick lime. The green fruit, pounded into a paste, makes good birdlime; the acrid juice is much used by the Gonds as a mild blister, where local irritants are required, such as in cases of sprains, rheumatism, &c., but in some constitutions it is apt to create a violent inflammation, and is extremely hurtful. The poor Lalla was unfortunately one of these, for, on being recommended by one of his Gond friends to try the popular cure for rheumatism, he suffered so much from intense inflammation and swelling that Fordham was somewhat alarmed at first; however, with patience and a little cooling medicine, he got better, and vowed he would never try a Gond remedy again.

The Gonds even eat the fleshy pulp that surrounds the seed of the bhelawun; it is hardly palatable, though some compare it, when cooked in hot ashes, to roasted apples.

In the Dullal valley our friends got another rib-faced deer, which fell to Fordham's rifle: the one which we mentioned before as having been secured in a net had become quite domesticated, but in captivity had exhibited a strange fondness for a flesh diet; it would eat anything, beef or mutton, and one day demolished a good plateful of goose. It is a question whether in a wild state the muntjac has the same propensities. We have heard of sambur eating carrion, and we can easily believe it after seeing the carnivorous proclivities of the rib-face. Whatever it feeds on, this little deer is one of the best for the table; the meat is short and tender, and always makes a welcome change in the hunter's bill of fare.

A totally different piece of shikar then fell in Milford's way in the shape of a chameleon, which he pounced upon with great delight, to the horror of an old malgoozar who

declared that the touch of the animal would surely bring disease. There is something unearthly and weird about the aspect and actions of a chameleon which may well give rise to vague fears in an ignorant and superstitious people, but the Englishman, knowing its harmless nature, laughingly told the malgoozar that the sahib-logue were proof against witchcraft and evil eyes.

'And an evil-looking eye he certainly has,' remarked Milford, as the reptile squinted with one eye forward and the other backwards.

'They say that the chameleon cannot swim,' said Fordham, 'for his two sides do not act in concert, but I have never tested the truth of this; there certainly appears to be but little unison in the movements of his limbs. The natives firmly believe in a highly poisonous lizard called the bis-cobra or bis-copra. I once had a whole kutcherry—amlah, plaintiff, defendant, witnesses, and all—put to flight by one of these dreaded lizards—a harmless monitor—running through the room. However, here we are at the top of the ghât, and yonder is Seonee; so put your spurs to your nag, Ernest, for we have still a smart canter before us ere we breakfast.'

Soma, the Lebhana, has been mentioned in these pages, and it is time now to introduce him to the reader. He is there, sitting on yonder bank by the roadside, with a large roll of dried tiger and panther skins at his feet. He might have done for the model of the torso of the Farnese Hercules, with his broad shoulders and muscular arms; but one of his legs is shrunken to the bone, and to counteract the contraction of the sinews he wears a heavy iron weight attached to his ankle. Some years ago he was noted for his strength and daring, qualities which made him a leader amongst his people, the Bun-

jaras, or gipsies of Central India; even Sheykha himself had no greater reputation as a daring tiger hunter; but a wounded tigress seized him one day, and a bitter struggle they had. Soma freed himself from his savage foe, but he could barely crawl from the scene of action; she had shaken his left thigh out of the socket. He was carried to his camp and tended in the rude fashion of his people, who, though learned in simple salves and dressings for wounds, had no idea of setting a dislocation; so under this ill-treatment, or rather want of treatment, poor Soma's leg stiffened and withered, and he became a cripple for life, able only to hobble along leaning on a tall staff. Yet the love of adventure was undiminished, and as soon as he could crawl about he went out after tigers again, and that he was successful the roll of skins now lying at his feet, and which he was taking up to the magistrate for the reward, gave ample proof. His hair-breadth escapes were numerous. On one occasion a tiger charged him and fell dead at his feet; as he used to say, in his simple straightforward way, 'I thought my hour had come, but it was not so written on my forehead;' and he would add, 'One day I shall be killed.'

On this occasion Soma was waiting for a comrade, who soon made his appearance, driving a pair of bullocks in a khanchur. Soma, having stowed away his skins, mounted, and they were soon merrily trotting away towards Seonee.

The weather was cool and cloudy, for the monsoon had broken, and the rainy season, which is always a delightful time on the plateaux of Central India, had commenced. At this time the temperature is low, the air fresh and cool, and occasionally the sun is hidden behind a grey cloudy sky for days at a time. Vegetation revives, and the brown and yellow tints of summer give way to

brighter greens. On every hedge and bank burst forth beautiful flowers of the season; here the eye lights upon a lovely white convolvulus or thunbergia, there upon the gay tassels of the *Gloriosa superba*, beautiful and poisonous as a serpent. Balsams gladden the fallow fields, and old stumps of trees are made gay with the pale blue *pharbitis*[1] or the deep rose-coloured *argyreia*,[2] whilst the borders of tanks and rivers bear the loveliest of the convolvuli, the *ipomæa reptans*,[3] a large pale rose-coloured flower with a dark purple eye.

In some parts of the country where the long grass had been burnt down, the blackened plains were fast turning to emerald green, and in the forests the gigantic mahoul creeper[4] was revelling in its growth, throwing itself over the tallest trees, and matting the underwood into impenetrable mazes. Dry sandy nullahs were turning into babbling brooks, in which the villagers were busily setting traps to snare the fry of fish, a reckless and improvident proceeding on the part of an ignorant people, which at the time had no check placed on it by their English rulers. Every little streamlet had its trap, made of finely split bamboo, through the interstices of which a grain of rice could hardly pass, and thus thousands of tender fry were destroyed, which, if left alone, would have in a short time provided wholesome food for their unreasoning captors.

Soma and his companion had journeyed about five miles, and were within sight of the white temples of Seonee, when a noble sambur dashed out of the thicket to their right, and, holding across a fallow field, cleared with a bound a broad ditch on the roadside. Immedi-

[1] *Pharbitis nil.*

[2] *Argyreia speciosa.*

[3] The tender tops and shoots of this plant are esteemed by the natives as a vegetable, and are used in stews.

[4] *Bauhinia racemosa.*

ately a horseman followed, and his fiery Arab, taking the ditch and half the roadway in his leap, tore after the sambur at a pace which boded ill to the deer, who by this time was rather distressed, as his heaving flanks and lolling tongue attested. Soma's large eyes dilated with pleasure as he watched the chase. 'Shābash! shābash!' he exclaimed, 'Fordham, sahib kee jai! how he rides, and what a horse! didst thou see, Burma, how he leaped over the nullah? Wah-wah! look at that! the stag is blown, he turns to bay—bap-re! bap-re! that was a narrow escape! how well the sahib dodged him! de' mar! khoob lugga! give it him; well shot!' he continued, as Fordham, avoiding the rush of the stag, brought him to his knees with a bullet, and then, jumping off his horse, he avoided another stroke of the stag's horns, and buried his hunting-knife in his heart.

Soma by this time had got out of his cart, and was hobbling away by the aid of his staff to where Fordham was standing, loosening Cossack's girths. On raising his head from under the saddle-flap, he saw the Lebhana, and saluted him heartily, for Soma was a favourite. The Bunjara made a respectful salaam, and complimented the Englishman on his skill and daring.

'But this is nothing to what you do with your dogs, Soma; and that reminds me I have a friend who is anxious to see your mode of spearing sambur; can you show it to him?'

'Certainly, sahib; my young men are your slaves whenever your lordship wishes. I cannot show the sahib myself, for I cannot run now, but we have some good dogs, and my *tanda* is just now encamped near Pertapoor, which is not far, and there are sambur in the neighbourhood. I am now going to Seonee with skins, and I will wait at your honour's house.'

'Have you been fortunate lately?'

'There are two tiger and three panther skins, besides two of wolves knocked over by the boys.'

'Well, come to me after you have had your rewards paid to you, and we will arrange for a sambur hunt for the chota sahib. You need not wait any longer, for here come Moula and the syce.'

Soma salaamed and hobbled away to his cart, and Fordham tightened his girths and rode off to Seonee, leaving his shikaree to look after the deer. He had gone out for a morning ride, and had started the sambur out of a small patch of jungle close to some fields, and, pressing him hard, had blown him before he could reach the heavy woods.

A satisfactory arrangement was made with Soma, and he went back to Pertapoor to arrange for the next day's hunt, when Milford promised to join him.

Next morning the young Englishman rode up to the Bunjara encampment, and found Soma waiting to receive him at the head of a sturdy band of wiry-looking men. Four or five large, rough-haired dogs were held in leashes, and half a dozen of the men were armed with spears; in the background were the tents made of tanned canvas of a reddish-brown tint, and the Bunjara women, with their peculiar dress and pointed horn on their foreheads, were standing in groups staring at the 'sahib.' The camp was pitched on a rising ground, and, as this was their idle season, some attempt at permanency had been made by the erection of a few mat huts as well as the canvas tents. Otherwise in the cold and hot seasons the Bunjara never dreams of pitching a camp. A *tanda* may consist of from a dozen to twenty men and women, half a dozen large fierce dogs of a peculiar breed, and a drove of from fifty to two hundred bullocks. These

bullocks are not fettered in any way, nor have they their nostrils pierced; they are simply trained to carry steadily whatever is put upon their backs, and to follow certain leaders which are chosen elders of the drove, and are distinguished by bells round their necks. Thus they traverse hundreds of miles of wild jungle road, inaccessible to carts, and keep up trade between places that would otherwise be completely isolated. After the day's march the naik of the tanda calls a halt near some suitable place where water and forage are obtainable, and the bullocks are one by one unloaded; the packages, which consist chiefly of bags of grain, are piled up in regular order, often in the form of a hollow square, in the centre of which the Bunjaras sleep; their cattle are turned loose to graze, and frequently fall a prey to tigers.

A Bunjara camp thus formed on the bank of some stream, and surrounded by dark forests, is a picturesque scene, especially at night, when the brawny men stand out in the light of their bright fires, and the women in their quaint costumes are flitting about, carrying pots of water, or cooking or grinding corn for the evening meal.

However, we must return to our camp near Pertapoor.

As all was in readiness no time was lost in starting. Soma accompanied the sahib to the bottom of the rise, and there made his farewell salaam. Just then Milford noticed an old woman and two boys cutting up wood into chips, which chips they put into an earthen *ghurra*, or water-pot; having first drilled a small hole in the bottom, they then dug a hole in the ground large enough to contain a second water-pot, on which they placed the first, and, covering all with fuel, they kept up a smouldering fire. On Milford's asking what they were about, Soma said they were preparing teak-wood tar for the hoofs of their cattle; the wood which was being cut

up was the heart-wood of the teak, and the tar was distilled from it by means of heat. He ordered the old woman to take up one of the receiving ghurras, which she did, and it contained a product resembling coal tar in smell and in its constituent parts, as was afterwards proved by analysis, but was mixed with impure pyroligneous acid, which is poured off as the tar settles, and the residue is thickened by exposure in pans. As Milford wanted some tar for his horse's feet, he tried this and found it answer.

They then proceeded to some low, well-wooded outlying hills, where a beat was organized. To the left of them was a wide stretch of open country intersected by a few nullahs, and it was arranged to drive out the sambur in this direction. The runners and their dogs were divided into small groups: one set was to take up the running first; the second was to go on ahead in the direction the deer was to be driven, and to hide till the time came for them to join in and press the animal hard; they again were to be relieved by one of two other sets which were posted further still, so that with relays of fresh pursuers to urge him to top speed, and the heavy nature of the ground after the late rain, it was expected he would get blown and stand to bay.

The beat was successful, for a stag, and two hinds, and a fawn broke out in the required direction, and, startled by a fiendish yell, went off at a rattling pace. The dogs were slipped at once in two parties—one going after the hinds and fawn, the latter of which was caught and pulled down, the other set, followed by Milford, going off after the stag, which, left alone, gallantly held on across country. The dogs set to their work in style and pressed him hard. Just as he cleared a streamlet fringed with bushes, a fresh set of men and dogs jumped up, one man hurling a spear

in a vain attempt to transfix him as he passed; but the noble deer put on a fresh spurt which distanced them for a time, but it did not last, for he was showing symptoms of distress. Still he held on bravely till the third party joined and took up the running freshly; it was then that he gave up the idea of fleeing, and, plunging into a small jheel, he stood at bay with rolling eyes, erect mane, and distended nostrils and eye-glands—that peculiar suborbital sinus which dilates and closes when the animal gets into a rage. Fiercely he struck with his forefeet at those dogs who were bold enough to venture near, of whom the majority were content with barking round the pool. At last up came a panting runner; whizz went his spear, but he had miscalculated his distance, and it fell with a splash under the stag. Two of the dogs thus encouraged went in at him again, but one got struck under the water and would perhaps have been killed had not a stalwart young Bunjara rushed knee-deep into the pool, and delivered his broad-bladed spear with such force that it was buried a full cubit in the stag's chest. This was the beginning of the end which soon came; the dogs seized and hung on to the dying deer as he struggled through the jheel, reddening its waters with his blood. Whizz went another spear, driven by a nervous arm, and plumped in with a dull thud just behind the left shoulder-blade, and this was the finishing stroke; the ready knife did the rest, and the carcass was drawn ashore, when the dogs were beaten off. Milford had continued an idle spectator of the scene, though deeply interested; he had wanted to see something of savage sport, and this formed a *tableau* he long remembered. The noble stag surrounded by panting dogs and half-naked sinewy Indians, the water and the varied landscape, with the blue hills bounding the horizon, made him wish to get off his horse,

there and then, and transfer it all to canvas; as it was he took keen note of all the details, and on his return home he reproduced the picture in his sketch-book.

The naik of the party now wished to know Milford's orders concerning the deer; was it to be sent into Seonee?

'No,' he replied; 'if they would cut off the head and send it, he would accept it gladly; as to the rest, it was theirs,' and he added five rupees for sweetmeats, to make the feast more savoury.

A few mornings after this, Fordham and his companion were walking through the woods in the vicinity of the station. Their path lying over a bed of laterite, the crisp gravel crackled under their feet as they strode along; each one had a rifle over his shoulder in readiness for any animal that might start up, but as they were not on the look-out for game they talked as they went. The conversation turned on the stag hunt with the Bunjaras, and Milford remarked it seemed to him rather cruel, and yet he supposed it was not more so than any other way of killing deer.

'No,' replied Fordham; 'in the end it is, as a rule, more merciful, for an animal brought to bay never escapes, and though there may be more apparent butchery in the use of the phulsa, or broad-bladed spear, of the Gonds and your friends the Bunjaras, still it is better that the poor creature should die thus than to creep away to linger with an ill-aimed bullet in its body; but I must say I always had a prejudice against the use of the spear to aught except a wild boar.'

'Yes, but your bullets never fail.'

'Ah! they do sometimes. No one has so perfect a command over his weapon as never to miss—the best shots fail at times; and when you read in a book, or hear

stories, of people going out and never missing anything, put them down as not being mortals, or anything else you like. I know I am a fair shot, the result of long practice, but I have missed often and made more bad shots than I like to think of. You remember I told you how I missed the man-eater at Sirekha—that was a shameful shot. Hullo! here comes a sounder!'

Bang! went Milford's rifle as a herd of wild pigs dashed across the road; a sharp crack followed the report, and the disappointed young man let his gun fall into the hollow of his arm, as he thought he had just illustrated the conversation by making a decided miss at the big boar of the sounder, and had buried his bullet in a tree.

Fordham looked at him with a comical expression, as he walked on with an impatient exclamation.

'Are you not going to look after your pig, Ernest?'

'No; what's the use? Did you not hear the bullet go smack into a tree?'

'Not a bit of it, my boy. I heard a ball smashing bone, or my ears are strangely at fault. Come, let us see.'

So saying he led the way into the thicket, and there, sure enough, lay a fine old boar, stone dead, shot through the brain.

'There will be a grand feast for the villagers off that fellow,' he observed.

'How shall we send and let them know?' asked Milford.

'I'll send my syce. Here, Ramdeen,' said he, taking the horse's rein and throwing it over his arm, 'run down to Mylee and tell the villagers to come for this pig. Look,' continued he, drawing a newspaper from his pocket, 'I will tie this to a branch on the road-

side, and tell them when they come up to it to take a hundred and fifty paces to the left, and they will find the animal.'

Having attached the paper to a bush, they walked on. Soon after they sighted another boar, a solitary one, and a very large animal, going along slowly and limping. Fordham pulled out his pocket-glass, took a look at him, and handed it to Milford. He seemed bathed in blood, and showed signs of having been in a severe engagement.

'That fellow has been tackled by a tiger, I fancy, Ernest,' remarked the elder sportsman; 'we will give the villagers a little more meat, and at the same time see his condition.' The shot was a very long one, but it was successful nevertheless, and the boar fell to rise no more. On going up they found him one mass of scars, evidently produced by a tiger's claws; he had been raked all over, but none of the wounds were serious except a couple of bites on his shoulder and back, and they looked ugly. As the boar lay in the little grassy dell, it was easy in the soft marshy ground to track his footprints, so after reloading they cautiously followed the trail for some distance; when Fordham, suddenly laying a hand on Milford's arm, pointing ahead, whispered, 'Look there, Ernest, under that grislea bush there is a tiger!'

So there was, and they stepped back behind some thick bushes. Fordham took out his glass and looked long and carefully.

'Upon my word, I believe he is dead. No living tiger would lie so long in one position.'

'Shy a stone,' suggested the young man.

'It would be rather awkward if he is alive and jumps up; these horses would bolt to a certainty. I wish I had Cossack here; he does not care a straw for a tiger. However, he looks as dead as mutton, and I cannot help

thinking that the boar has killed him. Just hold my horse's rein for a minute!'

Picking up a small boulder about the size of an orange, Fordham heaved it in the air so as to fall with a crash into the grislea bush. There was no sign, not a movement of a tail; at last they gave him a shot, and that had no effect, so they went nearer; then they were confirmed in their idea regarding the fight with the boar. The ground was ploughed up in all directions, and fresh blood encrimsoned the grass. The tiger was dead beyond all doubt, for he was lying partly on his back, with his head thrown back against the root of the grislea; his chest was a mass of scars, and he lay almost disembowelled, with four long clean cuts which had ripped him across and across. Attaching a halter to his hind legs, the two men, assisted by the syce, pulled the body out from under the bush. It was that of a fine young male tiger who had thus met his match; he could not have been long dead, for the body was quite supple, and the wounds yet fresh, and the injuries he had received proved what a formidable antagonist a boar could be. Many of the wounds seemed to have been inflicted either after death, or whilst the tiger was crippled and at the other's mercy, for the chest was gnawed and pounded to a jelly, and several of the rips must have been given about the same time. Some herdsmen coming up said they had heard a terrific noise in the jungle that morning, roaring, growling, and grunting, and, thinking that two tigers were fighting, they had drawn off their cattle to the other side of the hill. It was only when they heard the shot fired that they thought of coming near the place. Fordham ordered both pig and tiger to be taken to his house for further examination, and for the preservation of the head of the former; and Milford wished to have

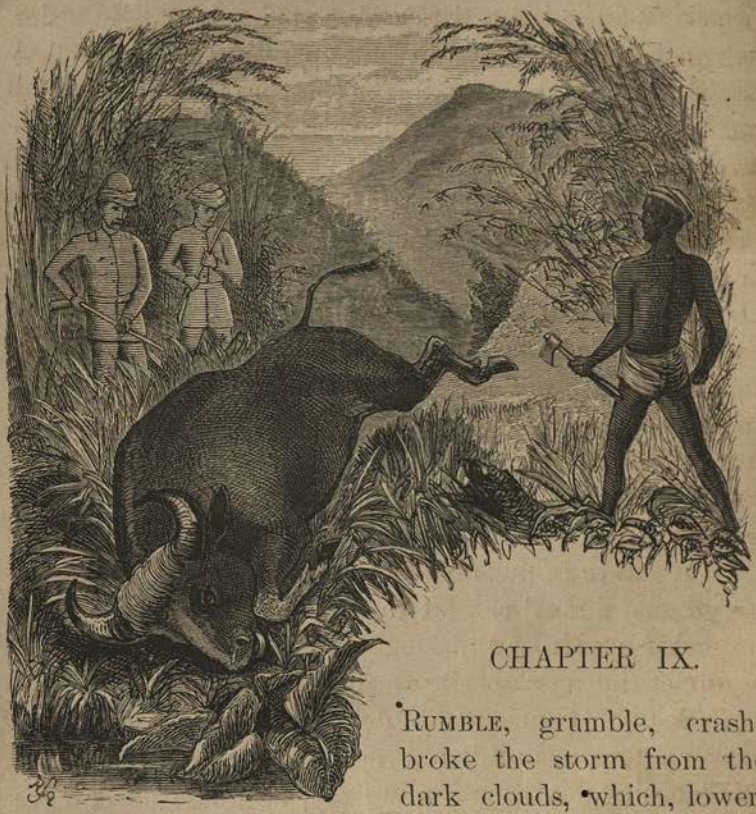
the skin of the latter, badly damaged as it was, in order to convince sceptics when he returned to England, that the account of the fight was not a mere 'Indian story.'

'I don't think I should have believed it, had anyone told me of such a thing before this morning,' he remarked as they rode home.

'Why not?' replied his companion; 'consider what a tough brute an old boar is, and his blind ferocity when roused. The natives, who are keen observers of the habits of wild animals, will tell you that a boar will face a tiger any day, and generally gets the better of the latter in a tussle. I remember on one occasion turning out of a small hill, or rather hillock, for it was a little well-wooded knoll isolated from the rest of the range, a large solitary boar, which I killed, and a tiger. They had lived together in the place for a long time, and evidently they had a mutual respect for each other, the one giving the other a wide berth.'

'But tigers do feed upon pigs?'

'Yes, of course they do—weak sows and young porkers frequently fall a prey. Had our young friend this morning not been a raw hand, he would never have attempted to try conclusions with the leader of the herd, but have contented himself with a squeaker. His inexperience led him to attack the boar, and I suspect he got crippled at the outset, and was not able to get away.'



CHAPTER IX.

RUMBLE, grumble, crash! broke the storm from the dark clouds, which, lowering overhead, had made the depths of the forest as gloomy almost as midnight; the heavy warm drops began to fall, slowly at first, then faster and faster; the lightning played in rapid and blinding flashes, and the peals of thunder shook the ground, and reverberated through the surrounding hills. The drops soon turned to heavy rain, which increased in intensity till at last it assumed the unwelcome form of a sheet of water. From every side came the rush of cascades, as the torrents collected in the narrow gorges, and swept down in mad career to swell the larger feeders of the mountain rivers, the nearest of which was the Suratee Nuddee, an affluent of the Gunga,

whose distant sullen roar now struck upon the ear, as the turgid flood rolled onward to the plains of Kerola. A small party of men stood for shelter under a thick clump of bamboos, waiting for the storm to pass over. The only one to whom the novelty of the scene had a charm was Ernest Milford. Even the discomfort of the rain added to the excitement of the occasion. He had impatiently longed for the day when he should enter the bison jungles of Sonawani, and the war of the elements seemed to him a fitting prelude to the exciting scenes he anticipated. To Fordham the storm was an unmitigated nuisance; still he was too old a hunter to complain, but turned up his coat collar, and folding his arms leaned against a tree trunk, waiting stoically for a break in the rain.

At last the deluge abated, and it was deemed prudent to go on, as they had far to go to the place where they intended to camp for the night. The rifles were carefully wrapped up in waterproofs and blankets, and, with coat collars turned up and heads bent down, they made their way on foot against wind and water, the Gond guide leading and the horses following.

Ah, luckless mortals! had they but known what was standing in their path! As Milford declared, the rain might have washed his clothes off, and hailstones have battered his nose to pieces, but he would have kept a keen look-out and have got a shot at the bison bull that stood for a moment looking at them ere he plunged into the thicket, and went off up the hill at an astonishing pace for so heavy an animal.

'No use, my boy, no use at all,' said Fordham, as his young friend hastily unrolled his rifle; 'that animal won't stop under five miles. I know their habits; a bison once started makes a long run before he thinks himself

safe. It is a pity we did not see him first, for he was a fine fellow; and it is a lucky thing he did not take it into his head to charge, or it might have been awkward for us. A friend of mine once came upon a solitary bull, just as we have now done, and the brute came at him with a rush, and took a large slice of bark off a tree behind which my friend dodged; he then got hold of an unfortunate gun-bearer and tossed him in the air, and finally took himself off, leaving the man senseless.'

'Did he die?'

'No; he got all right after a bit: some of these natives are as tough as gutta-percha.'

'I should think a blow from a bison would be something like a rap with a Nasmyth's steam-hammer, judging from the skulls in your collection.'

'Yes, but men do recover. Sheykha was once knocked down by a bison, but I fancy the long horns of the wild buffalo are more awkward to avoid, and more dangerous wounds are given by them.'

'The two animals are totally dissimilar, are they not?'

'Quite—they have nothing in common; their structure, their habits are widely different. The one is a bubalus, with large, wide-spreading horns, no dorsal ridge or hump, and large splay feet on coarse limbs; the other is a bos, with short, massive horns on a large head, with great frontal development, a curious dorsal ridge which runs half way down the back; the body is heavy, broad chest, and muscular fore-arms, but the leg below the knee is fine, and the hoof is pointed and deer-like; there is no mistaking the track of a bison for that of a buffalo. Then the buffalo keeps to his grassy plains, and jheels in which he can wallow, whereas the bison seldom leaves his bamboo-clad hills, unless some very tempting crop wiles

him away for a bit from the thick cover in which he delights.'

The course taken by the party lay for six miles over bamboo-covered hill and reed-grown valley. Many of the latter—jholas, as they are called—were very beautiful, but it was a beauty that brought to mind visions of fever and ague; the tall and fragrant lemon grass, the long green leaf of the *bun singhara*, the tangled creeper, the stately forest tree, and the pliant bamboo caused one to stop and admire, whilst the rank smell of decaying vegetation, the rolling mist, and the damp heat warned the loiterer to make haste.

As they rounded a clump of bamboos on the brow of a hill they had just ascended, they suddenly found themselves in a small clearing with neat little huts ranged around.

'A Gondee village,' remarked the guide with a grin.

Wild and lonely indeed was the little *tola*; not a sign of cultivation, however rude, had given the hunters any warning of the jungle hamlet in the midst of which they now found themselves. Here, perched on the summit of a forest-clad hill, the luxuriant vegetation of a tropical rainy season shutting them in on every side, the Gonds passed their lives unheedful, unconscious of the busy world beyond their wilderness. The lonely aspect of the place was increased by the stillness that reigned over all; the dusk of evening was fast spreading over the land, and the silence was broken only by the incessant pour of rain and the roar of the thousands of little cascades which went leaping down the rugged hills. The village looked deserted, but in fact all the inhabitants were indoors, and at one house there was a little *soirée musicale* being held round a glowing wood fire. It was a pity to disturb the conviviality of the meeting, but a guide was indispensable;

so, getting one of the party to accompany them, the hunters hurried on their way. The Gond struck off into a narrow, gloomy pathway in the forest, and led them at a rapid pace over hill and dale, winding about in the dusk with as sure a step as if he were guiding them through the well-lighted streets of some European town. A distant roar of waters now struck their ears.

'What is that?' asked Milford.

'*Nuddee*,' answered the Gond; and as they descended into the valley there was a torrent indeed! Fed by its thousand rills the proud stream leaped exultingly on its way, tearing along on its transient wave the dismembered branches that had too fondly hung over it; it seemed impossible that any one could cross that night, still the attempt had to be made. The stream was not broad, but it was swift, and an unassisted man would have certainly been swept away had he attempted to cross. A tall, slender tree grew by the edge of the water, and Fordham, thinking it might reach across the channel, had it cut down so as to fall across. Vain hope! swept down by the merciless current their anticipated bridge went out of sight. The rain had, however, abated, and the force of the torrent was sensibly diminishing. If they could only get a rope across. Fordham's ingenuity was again taxed. His eye fell on his horse. Here was a bright idea: Brownie was a powerful Cabulee; if he were once made to land on the opposite bank attached to a long halter, there might be a chance of getting across. So Fordham took all the halters and knotted them together, and, fastening one end round Brownie's strong neck, drove the poor animal into the stream. But Master Brownie objected strongly to go; at last a syce volunteered to ride him. Fordham hesitated for a bit, and then allowed him to attempt it.

'He is lighter than I,' he remarked, 'and then there is the rope to haul him ashore by if it comes to the worst.'

So Brownie started again, and this time gallantly took to the water. It was a hard struggle for the brave old horse, for the stream was running like a mill dam; twice they thought he was about to be swept down, but he bore up and reached the opposite bank. The rope was then attached to a tree on either side, and holding on to it the whole party crossed, though up to their waists in water.

After a further trudge of two miles, chiefly up-hill, they came upon their camp, which consisted of three deserted Baiga huts on the brow of the hill; the largest hut was taken for the sahibs, and was well cleaned and patched up; the second was for the kitchen and servants, and the third was occupied by old Wuzeer Mahomed, the malgoozar of the place, who had come on ahead to see that all was comfortable.

Very cheerful and snug did the little hut appear after all the discomforts of the day; there was a cheerful log fire burning in the larger room of the two of which the structure was composed, and a camp table and chairs quite gave a furnished air to the place; the walls were made of bamboo wicker-work, plastered with clay; the roof was quite water-tight. The inner room had a standing bed place, and altogether the Gondee hut was a far more comfortable place on a rainy night than the best canvas tent would have been.

The first thing our friends did was to change their wet clothes, and then to take a good dose of quinine, after which they dined, and went to bed thoroughly tired.

Day was just breaking when they awoke in the morning. The loud cry of the black cuckoo rang through the forests; the mists were rolling in heavy masses down in the valleys beneath, hiding the opposite hills from

view. There was a steady drizzle, and every leaf and branch kept up an incessant drip, drip.

'Soobhan Allah!' remarked old Wuzeer Mahomed, as he came out and salaamed, 'what rain! All the world has turned to water!'

'When will the bison tracker be here?' asked Fordham.

'He is here,' was the reply, as a young Gond stepped forward; 'I am Jeythoo.'

Milford looked at him with interest—a lithe, active savage, spare and wiry, though younger than he expected, he found Jeythoo just what he would have supposed him to be; there was something greyhound-like about him, a snaky suppleness and a restless sharp eye, which augured well for his reputed skill.

'Well, we had better get something to eat at once,' said Fordham, 'and be off, for we may have many miles to go yet before we see a hoof.'

The meal was hastily despatched, and they started, leaving the camp in charge of old Wuzeer Mahomed, who was getting too fat for the hard work the hunters expected to encounter. They had proceeded some miles over hill and valley without coming on a fresh track, when at last, in a deep *jhola*, the guide pointed to the tops of the grass shoots, which had here and there been lately cropped. A jhola is a small valley with ground of a swampy nature, in which grow in wild luxuriance the plants that delight in marshy soils; the grass shoots up in broad blades, and marsh creepers entangle the foot at every step. Dark forests shut them in on all sides; the air feels close and steamy. Feverish places are they, and to our wanderings in them we owed a series of attacks of jungle fever which took a long sea voyage to shake off.

Conspicuous amongst the strange flowers, Milford found a species of orchid, called by the natives the *bun singhara*, the root of which is used like salep, and is part of the forest produce bartered by the wilder Gonds for the cloths and other articles which they get from their more civilized brethren, or from the traders of the neighbouring markets. The other edible products which Providence provides them for the seeking are bamboo shoots, which, when young and tender, form a considerable article of food, a small species of our common garden solanum, the brinjal or egg-apple, and a kind of wild yam of whose mealy tubers we have been fain to make a meal at times; so that the hunter who knows how to make use of the gifts of nature need not starve if, belated and lost, he be compelled to camp out in the forests for a night.

Jeythoo pointed to the cropped grass, and said emphatically, 'Boda!'

There was little to catch the eye of the inexperienced hunter like Milford, for here and there a blade of grass had been nipped off, which was scarcely noticeable in the rank growth, but underneath in the marshy soil there were the sharp-pointed imprints of several hoofs.

Like a hound at fault the Gond hunted about to find the right trail. At last he pitched upon one which they eagerly followed for about a mile, when Jeythoo came to a halt and said they must go back; so they turned on their tracks and struck a fresh line, which seemed to give the guide greater satisfaction, for he went off at a pace which kept the two Englishmen at full walking stretch to keep up with him. Now he went more carefully, with his body bent and forefinger pointed earthwards, as the trail led over gravel beds and rocky ascents; to Milford it seemed by magic—not a trace could he discern of the

passage of the unwieldy animals they were in pursuit of, yet to the eye of the savage the track was as plain as is a page of print to us.

The day continued to be gloomy and drizzly, and was to a certain extent cool, which was in the sportsmen's favour, for the fatigue of climbing hills in a hot sun would have been excessive. They had passed the crest of a hill, and on the slope beyond had found unmistakable signs of the immediate vicinity of the herd, which made Jeythoo move with the greatest caution, when suddenly a loud yell rang through the woods.

Jeythoo stopped short with an impatient exclamation. 'Alas!' said he, 'those woodcutters have spoilt our sport; that shout was to scare away the bison. However, come along, quick, sahib; perhaps we may do something yet.'

Away they set off at a run. Yes, sure enough, the beasts had been disturbed: there was the place where they had been lying, seven of them Jeythoo declared; it was very provoking, and moreover it was hopeless to think of following them that day. A threatening rumble overhead announced more rain, and as they were consulting down it came with a regular pour.

'How far is it to camp, Jeythoo?' asked Fordham.

'Ten miles in a straight line,' answered the Gond.

Poor Milford's heart sank, for he felt exhausted; they had already walked some fifteen or twenty miles, and his feet were blistered and weary. For six hours they had been wet, and, save for a hasty cup of tea and a few biscuits, they had not eaten since the previous evening. It was now about two o'clock.

'We had better make haste, maharaj,' said the tracker; 'the storm increases, and there are torrents to ford.'

These, they knew, would be no joke; so, staggering on

to their feet, they toiled on, heavily now as there lacked the previous excitement to spur them in their exertions.

Several small streams were crossed knee deep, and they had accomplished about five miles on their homeward journey, when a distant booming noise struck upon their ears. This was the great stream, on the fording of which depended their getting home that day. Their route lay over a rise, and as they came to the top there was a sight that roused even the apathy of the Gond.

'Wah!' he exclaimed, '*burra poor!* how will the sahibs cross that?'

The whole valley was a foaming torrent; the turbid flood tore along the bank-sides, bearing away trees, bamboos, and grass, tossing and leaping in its exultant course; now whirling in eddies round a bend, now lashing in headlong fury at some stubborn rock, it would, as the guide said, have been death to try and cross it—an elephant could not do it.

The natives sat down in quiet despair; could they sit there till the waters subsided? The wind howled down the gorge, cold and bleak—the very thought was fever and ague.

'Come,' said Fordham to the tracker, 'let us try some means of getting across.'

'How will the sahib do it?' he asked, with a smile.

'You cannot snap the faggot,' replied Fordham, 'but you can break it stick by stick; let us walk along the banks, and cross each torrent that feeds the big one, and at last we must be able to get over this.'

'True,' answered the Gond, 'the sahib speaks well; come along.'

The tributary torrents were not in all cases easily forded; many of them were too impetuous to wade with safety, and bridges were made by the agile Gonds, who

crawled along bamboos on the bank-sides till they bent over with their weight, and then, seizing the drooping sprays of those on the opposite bank, they were drawn down and lashed together, and behind the barrier thus formed the whole party struggled across; but it was tedious and weary work. At last they came upon the main stream again. The channel was narrower, but the force of the current was still too great to allow of its being forded, and the only chance was to find a tree on the bank sufficiently large to reach across. At last they found one—an immense semul, whose trunk shot up like a tall mast to a great height before it threw out branches, and closely embracing it was a gigantic mahoul creeper.

'Hurra!' shouted Milford, who was the discoverer, and who, forgetting all his fatigue, cheered on the Gonds to lay well into the tree with their hatchets. Fortunately for them the wood was soft; the forest resounded with their blows. The top quivered, the trunk swayed—stand from under! Hurra! Slowly giving at first, the noble tree fell with a crash, and by good luck the topmost branches rested on the opposite bank. The tough bauhinia creeper moored the stem firmly in spite of the force of the stream. The nimble-footed Gonds tripped along the trunk and clambered through the branches on to the other side, but the Englishmen went in up to their necks, and, holding firmly on by the tree, struggled across with great difficulty, and they were thankful to find themselves once more on *terra firma*.

'It would be no joke,' remarked Fordham, 'to be whirled down that torrent. You know my big *chillumchee*,[1] Ernest? Well, I once lost it in one of the torrents

[1] A large washing-basin of brass.

in this very forest; the man who was carrying it was swept off his legs, and, heavy lump of brass as it is, the stream carried it right away down to the plains of Kerola, and it was found and returned to me by the malgoozar of one of the villages down there.'

'Well, I'm glad we did not trouble the said malgoozar *in propria persona* this time,' rejoined Milford, who felt more inclined to joke now that the hill with their camp on it came in sight.

It was nearly dark when they got in, and so closed a fatiguing and, as far as bison were concerned, an unprofitable day.

It is too much the fashion, young reader, to describe in stories of Indian hunting life the brilliant successes only, and these strung together make such a garland of victory that the impression is created that one has but to go forth into the woods and straightway arise beasts of all kinds for the hunter to lay low; whereas disappointments are frequent and failures many. Now and then comes a stroke of success, but the toil is great, and it would not be right of us as a faithful recorder of Indian camp-life, nor would it be fair towards those for whom we write, did we not chronicle here and there mishaps and disappointments, and days of unfruitful labour such as we have just penned.

Next morning the two friends woke later than usual; the fatigues of the previous day had somewhat told on them. The day was fine, and at one time the sun seemed inclined to struggle through the clouds, but the mist rose again, and a leaden sky betokened another sunless, if not wet, day.

Jeythoo was waiting, so, shaking off dull sloth, guns were brought out, breakfast hastily despatched, and a few sandwiches stowed away in pockets, and away they

set forth. This time Jeythoo started in an opposite direction to the route of the day before, and in a jhola found the tracks of a solitary bison.

'We shall have to be very careful about this fellow, Ernest,' remarked his companion; 'in the first place a solitary bison is excessively wary, and to tread on a dry twig at the last moment may lose you the fruits of a day's toil, as I have experienced several times; so look carefully how you walk, and avoid everything likely to crackle under your footsteps. Of course speaking will be out of the question, but if you want to say anything just hold up a hand, and we will stop and communicate in whispers. Now, *andiamo!* Jeythoo is patiently waiting. Go on, Jeythoo; I will fill your horn with English powder in addition to your usual bucksheesh if you show us a bison to-day.'

The savage grinned with delight, and salaamed; then lifting his hand with a gesture enjoining silence, the trio proceeded.

It was wonderful with what acuteness the Baiga led them over hill and valley for upwards of four miles. Once only was he at fault, when a bed of decomposed micaceous schist with out-cropping rock confused the trail, and then circling round he struck it again, and went on merrily, till at last he stopped on the crest of a hill overlooking a deep, narrow gorge, and motioning to his employers to lie down, he wormed his way like a prowling cat through the thick underwood.

Fordham knew the ways of the tracker, and, glad of the rest, laid himself down and patiently waited; but to Milford the absence of Jeythoo seemed to be much longer than it really was. He tried to imitate the calmness of his companion, but his pulses were tingling to be up and doing; he strove to be patient, and occupied his

mind in looking about at the curious insects and birds. There was a large beetle with yellow spots on the elytra, which the Gonds affirm to be poisonous, and only to be antidoted by very disagreeable remedies; then there was a very curious little creature like a spider, with a velvety coat of bright crimson; and a faggot insect, which consisted of a worm inside a little house of his own made of a faggot of tiny twigs, all cut to equal lengths, and fastened together by a tenacious web.

Once Fordham rose and cautiously moved about a dozen paces. A gigantic horn shed by some noble sambur had caught his eye, and his tape was out to measure it. It was the largest horn he had ever met with, and it was a matter of regret that its fellow was not to be found.

A little more patient waiting, and then noiselessly the bushes in front of them parted, and Jeythoo appeared once more. It needed no sign to tell the hunters that the trail had been followed to a successful end; the dilated nostrils and flashing eye of the tracker spoke for themselves. He held up one finger of the right hand, and then pointing down into the gorge he motioned that the animal was there; then, throwing his arms over his head and around his body, he tried to explain in pantomime that he was a huge bull with large horns. After allowing the dusky savage to moderate his transports, Fordham motioned to him to go on.

Down they went with the greatest caution—at times they were five minutes in getting over as many yards of ground; gravel had to be avoided, dead leaves softly trodden on, dry sticks to be carefully stepped over, branches cautiously held to prevent the leaves rustling, and at last Jeythoo motioned to them to lie down and crawl after him. At the bottom of the valley was a narrow belt of lemon-grass, through which percolated a

sluggish stream, and, as the hunters peered out of the thicket they had crawled through, they saw before them, standing under a large sāj tree, a bison bull. He was, as Jeythoo gave them to understand, a very large animal, with massive horns, and Milford's heart throbbed with excitement as he saw before him the gaur of whose power and fierceness he had heard so much. But there was still a further trial of patience in store for him; the animal's position would not allow of a deadly shot as he stood with his head from them, quietly lashing with his tail the flies from his broad flanks.

Fordham knew too well the excessive timidity of the creature to attempt to move from his place; they must wait, even though it be for hours, and it was nearly half an hour before the animal turned. He was standing in a listless, dozing sort of way, when at last a persistent gad-fly so teased him, that he turned round in the action of trying to rub his shoulder with a horn.

Fordham motioned to Milford to take him carefully just behind the point of the elbow, and a little above.

He dropped to the shot, but instantly recovering himself he dashed onwards at a terrific pace in the direction where the hunters were concealed. Fordham, darting aside, pulled his young companion behind a bamboo clump, and a heavy two-ounce bullet brought the bull down again—only to rise and stagger on. Following the trail they came upon him once more, when with head bent down he prepared to charge. At this moment a bullet from Milford's rifle struck him full on the forehead, and brought him down a third time stunned, when a shot behind the ear from Fordham settled his fate. He was a very fine bull, with splendid massive horns, and as he lay on his side Milford gazed at his huge proportions with astonishment. He measured

A POOL IN THE BISON-JUNGLES.

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six feet one inch at the shoulder, and he was over nine and a half feet from nose to insertion of tail.

A brief description of this noble animal[1] may not be out of place here.

It must not be confounded with the bison of Europe[2] or America;[3] it is more properly a bos, or ox of the genus *gavæus*, the leading features of which are a large, massive head with great frontal development, forming a ridge rising above the base of the horns. The horns slightly flattened on one side, very heavy, and bent over like a crescent; and a dorsal ridge which, rising from a hump over the shoulder, ends abruptly half way down the back.

In the gaur the head is broad, the muzzle large, the forehead covered with greyish-brown hair, almost black under the eyes, which have light-blue pupils; the girth is enormous, with immensely muscular shoulders and fore-arms, whilst the leg under the knee is wonderfully fine for so heavy an animal; the hoofs are deer-like and pointed; the legs are whitish, and give a stockinged look to the animal. Much has been said about the ferocity of the gaur, but as a rule it is the mildest of creatures, seeking safety in flight. Of course there are exceptions to this rule, but we think they are rare; they are often shot over water in the hot weather by the Pathans of Ashta and other villages on the borders of the forest. A little tank at Untra was a favourite resort, but the miserable powder and iron bullets of the Gondee match-lock are hardly able to bring down the gaur, whose skull is said to be proof against even an English ball, and the skin of whose neck is nearly two inches thick. The salt licks are also places to which bison as well as sambur resort, and they are sometimes killed in their nightly

[1] *Gavæus Gaurus.* [2] *Bison urus.*
[3] *B. americanus.*

forays on the crops raised by the Gonds in the valleys of the forest.

After they had spent some time over the fallen bison, Fordham remembered his sambur horn, and so they returned to the place where it lay. It certainly was of very large size, being three feet ten inches along the curve from burr to tip, and was very massive; but unfortunately the other one could not be found, so after a fruitless search they carried off the one in their possession.

Stags generally shed their horns in April, so the three months' exposure had told to some extent on this one, and at a little distance it looked very like the grey, barkless branch of a tree.

On their way home Jeythoo suddenly stopped, and said—

'Will the sahibs shoot more bison?'

'Certainly, if you can show them.'

'Then follow me; see, here are the tracks of a herd: look, this is a bull, a large one; here are three cows, and the prints of two calves.'

'Hurra!' shouted Milford; 'fire ahead, Jeythoo.'

Fordham smiled as he followed the tracker's lead. The ground for some distance was soft, and Jeythoo kept on almost at a run, now and then stopping to examine critically the green shoots that had been cropped, by which he seemed to calculate the time that had elapsed since they passed. The trail led them over a hill, and across an intervening valley over another rise, and as the tracker peered over the crest, he suddenly dropped on his knees, in which he was followed by the others, and then, cautiously crawling to the edge, they saw in the valley beneath on a broad ledge of turf, within easy range, the herd lying down.

They lay in a circle with their heads outwards, and the bull was one of those facing the hunters.

'Ernest,' said Fordham in a whisper, 'I am going to test a disputed question, and will take that big fellow right in the forehead with a ball; the chances are he will be stunned, if not killed, and when the others spring up at the report pick out the nearest cow. We'll reckon the first bull as your prize. I cannot resist the temptation of this shot, for it is a popular idea that a bison's skull is ball-proof.'

'All right,' replied the young man, 'I will take the next one.'

'Aim a little higher than you did last time, for the bullet must travel downwards, from the position we occupy, and it is as well to avoid injuring the poor creature uselessly.'

Fordham raised his heavy rifle, which was charged with a two-ounce bullet, hardened with quicksilver, and resting it on a knoll of outcropping basalt, brought the fine sight to bear on the hollow just below the frontal ridge, in a medial line between the eyes. Milford, quite forgetting the share he had to take in the subsequent proceedings, looked on with intense excitement, holding his breath as the bright flash leapt forth. The mighty bull, stricken as it were by a thunderbolt, gathered his limbs together with convulsive energy, and with an expiring groan rolled over on his side. The leaden messenger had done its work; no bone, however massive, could resist so forcible a projectile, though a light ball from a smooth-bore might have failed.

At the report the rest of the herd sprang to their feet and dashed headlong down the slope, Milford's cow amongst the lot, and he was so taken aback that when he did fire his shot was ineffectual to stop her. Fordham,

whose ready eye and hand never deserted him, sprang to his feet, and aiming at the root of the comb or ridge on her back, he dropped her in her tracks, saying, 'There, Ernest, I've stopped your runaway cow for you; go down and put her out of pain by a shot behind the ear.'

The cow was quickly despatched, and Milford compared her with the others he had seen. She was of slighter build than the bull, with a more slender neck and no hump; the horns were smaller and not so massive in proportion.

Milford returned to his companion, who was carefully examining the effects of his shot, and probing the wound with his ramrod; whilst Jeythoo was squatted under a bush some little distance off, making himself a rude kind of cigarette by rolling up a palas leaf, and stuffing it with dry tobacco from his pouch, which he lighted by hammering a flint on the edge of his axe over a bit of charred rag.

'I wish,' said Fordham, looking up from his measurements, 'that we could have secured one of those calves; I would give a good round sum for one of them.'

'Could not Jeythoo get one for you?'

'No, I am afraid not; trapping does not answer, and the cows are so savage in their defence of their young that it is a difficult matter to secure one, unless the mother of a very young one be killed, but then the calves almost always die. I never heard of one being kept alive and tamed, though I do not see why it should not be done, as an allied animal, the gayal (*Gavæus frontalis*) has not only been domesticated, but has produced hybrids with the ordinary Indian cattle; but it is recorded of the gaur that the young in captivity never live over the third year.'

On their way home Milford added to his collection a

specimen of the large brown squirrel,[1] which tempted his fate by running across their path on his way from one tree to another. This splendid variety is about three times the size of the English squirrel, being from sixteen to eighteen inches long in the body, and the tail is about twenty inches more. The prevailing colour is a bright maroon, the under parts being yellow.

It was late in the afternoon when they reached their huts, and they were glad to draw their chairs to the fire and rest till dinner-time, talking over the events of the day. And they were well satisfied with the three bison, two of them fine bulls, that had fallen to their lot.

On the next day they agreed to separate, Fordham taking a minor star, and giving Jeythoo to Milford; they decided to meet at a certain point on the confines of the forest, where their horses were to be stationed, from whence they intended to gallop to Ashta.

Jeythoo took the route by which they had returned on the eventful afternoon when they cut down the semul tree, and as Milford crossed the now perfectly dry rocky bed of the torrent, he noticed their impromptu bridge spanning the gorge, and parted with it for the last time with regret; it seemed like an old friend, and a good friend it had proved at a pinch. Had time allowed of it he would have liked to have had a canoe hollowed out of it; and as he walked along he built little castles in the air of the time when he might return to Ferndale as its master, and how nicely the canoe would float on the mere in the park, and the bisons' heads grace the hall; and then he thought of certain bright blue eyes that might look at the said canoe, and bisons' heads, and tiger skins, and a little heart that would flutter when she thought of the dangers her husband had gone through to.

[1] *Sciurus maximus.*

gain these trophies, and——in fact Master Ernest was getting very sentimental and abstracted, when Jeythoo suddenly broke in on his dreams with an exclamation of 'Boda.' Milford started and looked around, but the tracker pointed to the print of a hoof in the soft ground, and held up one finger.

Another solitary bull. Milford thought that solitary bulls were the exception, but this was the third they had met with since they entered the Sonawani forest. It was a long trail, but luckily it was all in the way home, or rather to the point of rendezvous, and at last Jeythoo tracked him home to his mid-day siesta in a deep jhola; piloting Milford carefully down he led him behind a tree, and pointed excitedly with a long skinny finger at a dark object in the brushwood about forty yards off. It was the bison, no doubt, but it was not possible to get a fatal shot at him, and Milford knew it was useless firing unless he could be certain of his aim; so he waited and waited with the greatest patience, but still the animal kept his position; at last, fearful of detaining Fordham too long at the place where they were to mount, and knowing they had a smart gallop before them, he determined to change his ground and get round the bull. Jeythoo made a gesture of dissent, not knowing the motives which actuated the proceeding, but Milford overruled him; he regretted it afterwards, but with the regret was the thought that he might have watched for half a day. Cautiously as he moved, the action was fatal, for as he inadvertently trod on a dry stick the bison gave a snort of alarm, and plunging into the thicket, crashed through the forest as he rushed up-hill. Milford's first impulse was to pitch forward his rifle and fire, but he restrained himself with the thought that he could but hurt the animal without in any way stopping him, and

he would not run the risk of perpetrating an act of wanton cruelty, simply for the sake of saying he had wounded and lost a bison.

Jeythoo was rather disgusted; if the sahib had only been patient, he would have had a shot. At last Milford made him understand that the burra sahib was waiting, and that it was necessary to make haste, on which the savage was appeased, and set off at a brisk walk in the Ashta direction. Of course if the burra sahib had been there the bison would have been brought to bay, but as it was it could not be helped. Milford felt the conclusion of his stalk had been very unsatisfactory, and he was not even to have the good opinion of Jeythoo at the last, although Jeythoo had noted with satisfaction some of the shots made by the young sportsman on former occasions. However he in some measure recovered his lost ground in his sable companion's estimation by dropping in fine style a sambur stag, which with a hind dashed across their path.

When they got to the horses Fordham was already there, having arrived about a quarter of an hour before them; he had been unsuccessful, not having seen a thing worth shooting.

They were quite sorry to part with Jeythoo, and gave him an ample present of money and gunpowder, and promised to return again some day to Sonawani.

The morning after their return to Ashta, old Wuzeer Mahomed asked Milford if he would like to see a little fish shooting. Of course he was anxious to see anything that was new to him, so, mounting a khanchur, they drove out to a tank a little distance off, where there was a sort of wooden pier with a tower at the end of it. Into this they mounted, whilst a little black-looking urchin kept watch below. The sun was just getting up,

and gilding the surface of the calm little mere, which reflected as in a mirror the fringe of dark forest around. Old Wuzeer Mahomed touched his English companion, who was abstractedly gazing at the scenery, lightly on the sleeve, and pointed to the water below. Milford looked down and saw a large fish basking on the surface, with his dorsal fin out of water. As he was expected to fire at it, he did so, striking it as near to the head as possible. That the shot took effect was attested by the plunges of the fish as it sank, and immediately the boy dived after it and brought it out. It was a large sanwul, or murral as it is called in some parts of India (*Ophiocephalus marulius*), a common inhabitant of tanks throughout the country. In colour it is a dingy orange, with dark, greenish vertical bands, and white spots. It attains a length of four feet occasionally, and is often eaten by Europeans. It is chiefly taken by means of night lines baited with frogs, but for rod fishing a cockroach is the most tempting lure, though a very disagreeable one. Soon after a round spot appeared on the surface of the water, and thinking it was another sanwul Milford took a careful aim and fired, but without any apparent results; again the object appeared, and a second bullet went true to the mark, but without effect; and old Wuzeer Mahomed explained the cause, by stating that the shots were fired at terrapins, on which it was quite useless to waste powder and ball. The fish shooting was stupid work; perhaps to the indolent Oriental, who could squat and smoke, and take a shot now and then, it might be enjoyment, but Milford thought a little of it was quite enough.

He was, however, amused and interested for a time by watching the action of the piebald kingfisher,[1] as it hovered over the water for its prey. This curious black-

[1] *Ceryle rudis.*

and-white kingfisher is common all over India, and the way in which it hawks for its food has doubtless been noticed by most people. The ordinary birds of this family watch from some fixed post of observation—an overhanging bough or rock from which they dart—but the pied kingfisher roams freely on the wing, now and then hovering quite stationary over a likely spot, and then suddenly closing his pinions he falls, as though he were made of lead, into the water, from whence he emerges with a fish in his bill, which he carries off to some adjacent branch to devour. This pretty little bird occasionally visits Europe, where its activity has been noticed by naturalists. The certainty of its aim is most astonishing; it seldom, if ever, fails in its dart.

After a while Milford suggested to the old malgoozar that they should try some more enlivening sport than the fish shooting, and proposed a drive round the jungles in the khanchur. So they descended from their perch and drove off, the little bullocks trotting along merrily to the tune of their bells. The country they went through was undulating, sparsely cultivated, and a good deal overgrown by scrub, principally of beyr bushes. Here Milford shot a doe chikara or gazelle; unlike the other antelope, but in this particular resembling the goats—the female chikara has horns, slightly ringed at the base, but otherwise smoother and much slighter than those of the male, which are gracefully curved and massively proportioned for their length, which ranges from ten to fourteen inches, and are ringed from the base to within two inches of the tip. The natives make a curious dagger of the horns of the chikara. A pair of horns are reversed, base to base, overlapping about five inches; the ends are firmly fastened by brass clamps, the space between the curve of the horns allowing of the hand to pass through for a grip;

the tips of the horns are armed with steel points, thus forming a double dagger.

The horns of the female are used sometimes by shikarees for carrying the fine gunpowder with which they prime the pans of their matchlocks.

The chikara is sometimes hunted down by dogs, assisted by a large species of falcon, the saker (*Falco sacer*). The bird is trained to fly at the poor animal's head, which it buffets with its wings, whilst at the same time it pecks at the gazelle's eyes, till the poor creature is so impeded in its flight as to allow the dogs, which would otherwise have no chance, to come up and seize it—a cruel and unmanly sport to our way of thinking, and one in which no true hunter would take pleasure.

As they drove on they heard a shouting and laughing of merry Gonds, and soon came upon a party of them accompanied by two dogs, busily engaged in digging out a porcupine.[1]

The entrance of the animal's abode was a hole in a bank, at which the dogs were yelping and scratching; but the bipeds had gone more scientifically to work by countermining from above, sinking shafts downwards at various points till at last they reached his inner chamber, when he scuttled out, and charging backwards at the dogs with all his spines erected he soon sent them flying, howling most piteously; but a Gondee axe hurled at his head soon put an end to his career, for a porcupine's skull is particularly tender. Milford looked on with the greatest interest; he had never been able to understand how the porcupine could make his quills weapons of offence—of defence they were self-evident, but, as the darting theory was one in which he put no faith, he was puzzled to know how the quills were so formidable.

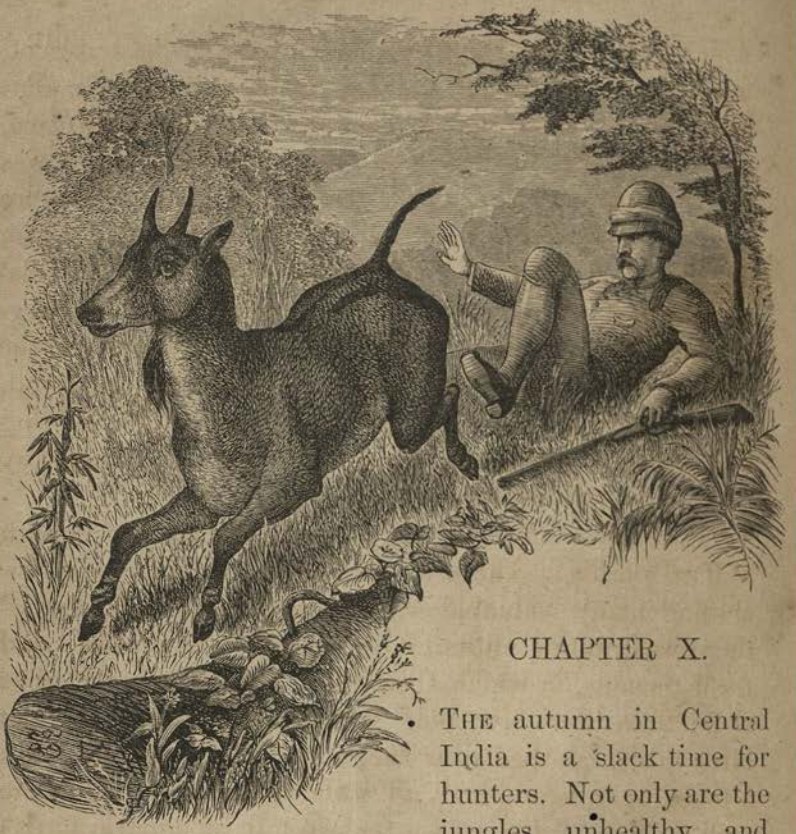
[1] *Hystrix leucura.*

However, when he saw the infuriated little creature rushing backwards and sideways, erecting the sharp spines as he made little sudden jobs at his assailants, he realised how the offensiveness was accomplished. The two dogs had suffered severely on this occasion: one had a quill driven deep into his neck; the other had one through his jaw, and another fixed so firmly into the muscles of the face under the eye, that it was with the greatest difficulty and exercise of sheer strength that the spine was drawn out. Milford bought the porcupine from the Gonds, as he was anxious to taste it, having often heard of the excellence of the meat, which resembles very delicate pork.

The rest of the day was spent in skinning the bison heads carefully, and preparing them, and cleansing the skulls, whilst the skins were packed in small kegs of strong brine for future preparation.

The next morning they marched back towards Seonee, and Milford turned in his saddle at the top of a small ghât, with a sigh of regret as his eye wandered for the last time over the dark distant line of the bison jungles of Sonawani.

HORNS OF THE GAUR.



CHAPTER X.

The autumn in Central India is a slack time for hunters. Not only are the jungles unhealthy and feverish, but the abundance of water and the growth of the underwood are all against the shikaree, and in favour of the animal. Our friends were, therefore, compelled to remain in the station for some time, making occasional forays on the antelope plains, which, from the open character of the country and perfect drainage, were healthy at all seasons of the year. Fordham's official duties gave him ample occupation; but Milford longed for camp life again. There is almost the same monotony in a small station that there is on board ship—the same faces day after day—the same routine. Three young men making love to the solitary spinster; the doctor's

wife cuts with the joint magistrate's, both equally resenting the pretensions of the collector's spouse, who considers herself the *Burra Mem*, or leading lady of the place, in virtue of her husband's position. Such, however, was not the case with Seonee in those days; for ladies were few—in fact, there was but one at that time; and the men all pulled well together, and there used to be a social custom of dining at each other's houses, each guest carrying over his own dinner. For instance, the doctor and the deputy commissioner would meet in an evening stroll, and the latter would say, 'Come along to dinner and bring over yours;' so the dinners would be combined and cosy little parties thus formed *sans cérémonie*.

Fordham's house was a pleasant one for a lad with Milford's tastes. There was a good library of books, including many valuable works on 'Natural History;' there was quite a museum of birds, beasts, reptiles, and fossil remains, in which the valley of the Nerbudda is so rich; there were live pets without end, from cages of birds to a large shed near the house full of deer, leopards, a tame tiger, bears, and all sorts of animals. Near the well in the garden was a tealery full of aquatic birds; beyond that, again, was Chand Khan's special domain—a substantial brick-built kitchen, which was a great contrast to the horrible little dens in which unmentionable culinary atrocities are perpetrated in most Indian houses. Chand Khan's kitchen was as clean as an English one, with a well-scrubbed dresser and neat racks for his pots and pans; whilst from antelope and stag horns, which graced the walls, depended numerous ladles, forks, frying-pans, and other portions of his *batterie de cuisine*. This kitchen was the old fellow's special pride. Having some notion of bricks and mortar, he got permission from his master and built it under his own eye, and according to his own

notions, and the whole was extremely creditable to both architect and cook.

By the kitchen door, chained to a huge stake, lay on a wooden bench Fordham's pet tiger, 'Zalim,'[1] now a fine, nearly full-grown specimen of his race.

Zalim had been caught with a brother, whilst yet a helpless cub, by some of Fordham's servants as they were crossing a sandy river-bed in the Dongertāl talooqa. Their mother had evidently left them in search of food, and the little fellows had crawled away from the corner in which she had stowed them; so they were ruthlessly abducted and carried off in triumph to Fordham, who succeeded in rearing one of them, which, in course of time, became a great pet, and was named 'Zalim' by the native servants, who took a great fancy to him; and so little Zalim throve apace, waxing, not in wisdom, but in mischief and stature. He would prowl round the garden stalking the other animals that roamed about, setting to work in a most business-like way.

At last, when he was about the size of a Clumber spaniel, it was considered time to restrict his liberty; so a stout buffalo-leather collar was put round his neck, and a strong chain fastened him to his stake—a proceeding master Zalim at first decidedly objected to, and nearly committed suicide by hanging; but he got reconciled in time to his novel situation, and from thenceforth became the especial pet of the table servants, who, as they sat round him at the kitchen door, would roll him over on his back and tickle and scratch him to his infinite enjoyment. He was never allowed raw meat, but had a small allowance of boiled goat's flesh daily, with as much milk as he could drink; and this he would only drink out of a bottle, even when full-grown. Put a dish of milk before

[1] *Anglicè*, 'the Tyrant.'

him, and in would go his huge paw upsetting the vessel; but hold out a bottle full, and he would settle down, like a greyhound *couchant*, and drink it down with great satisfaction.

On one occasion he got the flavour of raw meat. He had been taken to be photographed, but he was restless and would not remain still for a second. The photographer thoughtlessly gave him a raw rib of beef, which Zalim seized at once; but the motion of gnawing it was even worse than the first fidgetiness, and his keeper was ordered to take the bone away; but the attempt was met by a savage growl, and the tiger's eye glared angrily at the man as he retreated. Fordham saw this would never do, so he took hold of the bone, ordering Zalim to let go; but the growls became more ominous, and he made a vicious stroke with his paw. Planting a tremendous blow full on the mutineer's mouth, his master picked up the dropped bone and flung it away, but the animal was very restless and unhinged in his temper for a time; and this was the first taste he had ever had of raw meat.

On one occasion his master, shaking hands (or paws!) with him, gave what schoolboys are rather fond of—a knuckling. Zalim quickly protruded his claws and ploughed a deep furrow in the aggressive hand. Fordham quietly wrapped his handkerchief round it and walked away.

A full-grown man might do anything with him; but when a child came near, the tiger would crouch and his ears go back and eyes glare, whilst his whiskered lips would draw back over his glittering tusks. So for all these things Fordham made up his mind he was not altogether a safe pet, and Zalim was under orders for England. Especially had this determination been come to since he broke loose one night and made his way to his

master's bedroom. Fordham walked in after dining with a friend, and, finding no light, felt for some matches, when suddenly he found his legs embraced and the calf of one of them in the mouth of what he at first thought was a dog; but, remembering Zalim, he put down his hand and patted him, on which the animal jumped up and gambolled round him like a kitten, whilst he lighted a candle and secured him.

He was often allowed to come into the room when the doors were closed, and then he would have a wild game of romps, springing over beds and chairs, worrying a red sofa-bolster which was his special object of attack.

There was a little scene between him and Cossack one morning. The horse had come up to be fed with bread, and, just to see what he would do, Fordham held a piece of bread close to the tiger. On came the fearless horse and found himself face to face with the king of the felines. Nothing daunted he stood still as Zalim impudently advanced, and gave him a quiet pat on the nose. The next moment, with a shrill whinny, the Arab struck out with his forefoot; and had the tiger not drawn back very suddenly, the iron-shod hoof would have made some impression on his skull.

We have here called the tiger the king of the felines. In the opinion of every one who knows him, he is so, though the title is usually given to the lion. The lion has certainly a more noble and majestic appearance, owing to his flowing mane; but in size, strength, and ferocity he is inferior to the tiger. As regards size we were doubtful, till we had opportunities, some ten or twelve years ago, of measuring skeletons of the two animals, when, to our surprise, we found the tiger the larger animal. There is little doubt about the relative ferocity of the two; and perhaps some may remember

the fight which occurred in one of the menageries in England, in which a lion and a tiger of apparently equal powers got by accident together, and how the former was killed.

In a cage adjoining the deer-house was a fine leopard, or properly panther—a nice, sleek, glossy-skinned creature, whose jet black rosettes shone out on his pale yellow coat. He was tame, but untrustworthy, treacherous, and cruel like all of his species. The tiger is an amiable creature compared with the panther; the latter is a cold-blooded, vindictive, treacherous, sneaky brigand, ever merciless and shifty, but one who fights to the death when brought to bay.

This one had been cooped up in the same cage with a slightly smaller companion, with whom he seemed to live on terms of perfect amity; but one night there was a quarrel, and a fight ensued, in which the larger overcame and slew his comrade, and before morning ate a considerable portion of him.

When taken young, panthers are most amusing and playful little pets; but they should never be kept after six months of age, except in confinement. Hundreds of melancholy accidents have occurred by neglecting this rule.

In the deer-house were several specimens of sambur, axis, rib-face, and others. In the first pen was a sambur doe, as a rule a very quiet and inoffensive animal, but when vexed with her keeper about anything, she is apt to rear up and strike rapidly like a boxer with her forefeet. Next to her was a stag with his horns in velvet. Then came a pen with 'Tommy,' a little Brahminy bull, brown, with black head and hump, a perfect little beauty. Tommy would trot twenty miles with a light weight on his back, and would stand fire like a rock, and so was

occasionally used as a stalking-bullock for antelope; but he was somewhat inclined to be vicious, and had signalized himself one day by tossing an unwary *bhisti*, or water-carrier, who had taken it upon himself to walk just ahead of Tommy, which the self-important little creature resented by giving him a toss over. Next to Tommy came a fine large blue bull, whose pierced nostrils and head stall showed that he was in some manner more subjected than the rest of his wild companions. And this was the case; he had been trained to carry a rider or a load, and, though he was a little awkward to sit, Fordham often rode him. It is a strange thing, that, whilst the nylghau can be trained to bear a load or drag a carriage, the sambur, though of equal size, is utterly incapable of carrying the least thing. We have tried to train them, but their backs give way with the slightest pressure.

Fordham used to make his blue bull earn his gram by carrying the servants' bundles whilst marching out in camp, and this not only saved an extra pack-bullock, but it kept the animal's spirits down; otherwise he was rather given to be aggressive with his short straight horns.

The shed contained several other specimens of deer; the rib-faced, which was caught in the net on the first day when Milford was initiated into Indian field sports, and which was now a fine fat fellow, very tame; [1] two beautiful axis, a stag and a hind; a pair of gazelles, two four-horned antelopes, and three mouse-deer. We have already noticed most of these in previous pages, so we will turn to a rather handsome-looking animal resembling the civet cat; this was a tree cat, or *Paradoxus Musanga*. It is commonly reported to have an excessive fondness for

[1] We have elsewhere mentioned his carnivorous propensities.

toddy, or the juice of the palm tree, and from this it gets the name of toddy cat; but in Central India, or rather in the Central Provinces, toddy is unknown, the national drink being mouhwa, a strong spirit distilled from the flowers of the mouhwa tree.[1] The musang, therefore, lives on small animal fry—mice, lizards, eggs, small birds, and cockroaches—and is a most undesirable visitor in the poultry yard. In appearance it is like a rather stout genet, with longish fur of a deep fulvous colour, striped longitudinally on the sides with black, the head and limbs being dark blackish brown; but the colouring varies considerably.

Fordham's specimen was exceedingly tame, and whilst he was in the station it was allowed to run about the house, though there was a considerable amount of jealousy between it and his especial pet, 'Pipit,' commonly called 'Pips,' a large grey mungoose.[2] 'Pips' was a splendid specimen of his kind, and talented withal. He measured seventeen inches in the body, the tail fifteen, total thirty-two inches, and weighed three pounds seven ounces. He was caught by a lame old servant of Fordham's, who presented him to his master. The little mite was then about the size of a rat, and probably about a month old, and, after being at first very wild and snappish, he became excessively tame. Fordham had two of them at the same time, and in a letter to a naturalist friend he wrote:—

I witnessed yesterday a singular ebullition of anger on the part of one of my pets. They are fed twice a day on raw meat, chiefly birds, and on receiving their portions they run off growling into some corner to enjoy their meals at leisure. On this occasion, however, the two ran

[1] *Bassia latifolia.*

[2] *Herpestes griseus.*

into the same corner, and against each other, when there immediately commenced a combat, and as the little one was getting the worst of it, I pulled off the other. He was in a very excited state, every hair stiffly erected, and, as I let him go, he rolled over on his back foaming and with every appearance of suffocation; but after a few struggles he recovered, and took a sensible view of the question by carrying off his meat to devour in peace. It is great fun to see my last acquisition and a little jungle cat (*Felis chaus*) playing together. They are just like two children in their manner, romping and rolling over each other till one gets angry, when there is a quarrel and a fight, which, however, is soon made up, the kitten generally making the first advances towards a reconciliation, and then they go on as merrily as ever. The cat is a very playful, good-tempered little thing; the colour is a reddish yellow, with darker red stripes like a tiger, and slightly spotted; the ears and eyes are very large, the orbits of the last bony and prominent. What is it? Chaus or Bengalensis? I am not as yet learned in cats when very young. If it be a real jungle cat—which my shikarees declare it to be—it strangely belies the savage nature of its kind, as Thomson says,

> The tiger darting fierce
> Impetuous on the prey his glance has doomed.
> The lively shining leopard speckled o'er
> With many a spot—the beauty of the waste,
> And scorning all the taming arts of man.

Poets are not always correct. Tigers have often been tamed, though they are not to be depended on.'

The rest of the letter we need not quote, as it is all a description of a species of sand-grouse (*Pterocles exustus*), a bird we have already noticed. But to return to our friend Pips. Though so fond of cats, he had the greatest

aversion to dogs, showing but little fear of them, and attacking the largest on the least provocation. Though reared on raw meat, he preferred it cooked, and had lost much of his savage nature. Eggs he was partial to, holding them in his paws, whilst he cracked one end, and bit a little hole out of which he sucked the contents. A particularly fastidious little animal, he avoided dirt of all kinds, and most carefully cleaned himself after meals, even to picking his teeth with his claws in a most absurd way. Then as to his accomplishments: he had been taught to sit up, shoulder a miniature musket, 'ready, present, fire;' jump over his master's head, turn somersaults, sit on a little stool, and had a variety of little tricks. The powerful fleshy tail of the mungoose (like that of the kangaroo) helps him to sit up with ease; in fact it is a common thing with the wild animal to sit up when on the look out. Fordham's mungoose would follow him out shooting, and rush to seize a bird if it fell. On one occasion Pips was lost, and there was a general lamentation in camp. He had been entrusted to a syce, who had given him a ride on a led horse; but at some part of the way poor Pips had tumbled off, and, his collar slipping over his head, he fell on the road and was left behind. Great was the dismay of the syce on discovering his loss, and great was the grief of his master. They had traversed eighteen miles of country, and there was no certainty where the accident had occurred, so Fordham gave up the idea of seeing his pet again. However, as he went out shooting next morning, an accident turned him, from the course he intended to take, into the old track taken by his camp the day before, and after going a short distance he stopped to cap his rifle, for a black buck appeared in the distance. As he was doing this a little yelp was heard, and down rushed poor Pips out of a palas tree by the roadside.

The cries of the mungoose are—a grating mew, the most common; then occasionally, especially when calling to one another or searching for anything, a querulous yelp, more like the note of a bird; and thirdly, the growl, which is like that of a cat.

One day Milford and Fordham, after making the round of the pets, walked down to the stables, and in the camel shed found a little rude surgery going on. The camel driver was dressing a huge sore on a camel's back with a poultice of green leaves mashed into a pulp. On enquiring into the cause of the sore, the man declared it to have been caused by a musk rat running over its back.

'Poor little wretch!' said Fordham as they turned away; 'another sin falsely laid to its charge, for a more harmless beast never existed; but there is a strange coincidence in this superstition, Ernest. In former days in England a similar charge used to be made against the musk rat's little European brother, the shrew mouse. Gilbert White, in his "Natural History of Selborne," says: "It is supposed that a shrew mouse is of so baneful and deleterious a nature, that whenever it creeps over a beast, be it horse, cow, or sheep, the suffering animal is afflicted with cruel anguish and threatened with the loss of the use of the limb;" and in Brand's "Popular Antiquities" you will also find an account of the barbarous ceremonies used to avert the ill effects of the supposed venom.'

'But musk rats are horrid things,' said Milford. 'I never heard any one say a good word in their favour.'

'That,' rejoined his companion, 'is because of the general ignorance regarding the animal. I never allow one to be killed in my house, for several reasons. In the first place they are not rats at all; they belong to the

carnivora and not to the rodents, and the skull of a musk rat is something like the miniature of a bear's skull; they creep through holes made by rats, and get the credit of having made them, but their dentition would not allow of such a feat. Their food is entirely animal—cockroaches, scorpions, grasshoppers, and the like—and they are of great use in a house in clearing away noxious insects. At one place I had a musk rat that would come out every evening to my whistle, and take grasshoppers out of my fingers; it seemed to be very short-sighted, and did not notice the insect till quite close to my hand, when, with a short swift spring, it would pounce on its prey.'

'But the smell is so objectionable,' urged Milford.

'Have you noticed it much in this house?' asked Fordham.

'No, I cannot say I have. Occasionally I have come across a whiff, but nothing to take much notice of.'

'And yet,' replied the other, 'my house is full of them. No doubt they have a disagreeable musky odour which they can emit when they like, but that is only when they are frightened, and their nests are also impregnated with the smell; but as to their tainting wine through the bottle, no man who has studied the matter or scientific naturalist would entertain the idea for a moment. In the case of beer or wine bottled in this country, a musty smell is often noticed, which is at once laid to the charge of the poor musk rat; but it is either from an ill-washed bottle in which either a musk rat has been, or which has been inhabited by cockroaches, or the corks used have been tainted; but I doubt whether the glands of the skunk, which are far more powerful than those of the musk rat, would, if rubbed over a bottle, give the faintest flavour to the most delicate wine. My theory is that the animal in a quiescent state does

not emit the musky smell. We had once been talking at mess about musk rats; some one declared a bottle of sherry had been tainted, and nobody defended the poor little beast but myself, and I was considerably laughed at. However, one night soon after, as I was dressing before dinner, I heard a musk rat squeak in my room. Here was a chance. Shutting the door, I laid a clean pocket-handkerchief on the ground next to the wall, knowing the way in which the animal usually skirts round a room. On he came and ran over the handkerchief, and then, seeing me, he turned and went back again. I then headed him once more and quietly turned him; and this went on till I had made him run over the handkerchief five times. I then took it up, and there was not the least smell. I then went across to the mess-house, and, producing the handkerchief, asked several of my brother officers if they could perceive any peculiar smell about it. No, none of them could. "Well, all I know is," said I, "that I have driven a musk rat five times over that pocket-handkerchief just now." '

'What did they say then?'

'Well, I think they were inclined to be incredulous; but as I had not the character of being a romancer, I think I scored a few points in favour of the poor little persecuted beast. However, to go from a molehill to a mountain, let us go down to the elephants. There is a grand operation to be performed there; no less than the extraction of a piece of a back tooth out of a live elephant's head.'

'Good gracious! Who is to be the dentist?'

'Ramzan Khan, the old mahout. He believes he can cure this elephant which has been going off into a decline, all, as he declares, on account of an abnormal back tooth which ought to come out.'

'But can he get it out? The animal will be maddened with pain.'

'Well, he does not intend to draw it, but to cut off a projecting part which irritates his mouth and prevents his eating; the man is clever, so I am going to let him try the experiment. We got the elephant cheap on account of his bad condition, and if he is cured he will be worth double the money, for he is a fine big fellow. But to buy an elephant cheap on account of his bad condition does not always pay. I once heard of a very fine animal for sale at Nagpoor, so went down to have a look at him. When he entered the compound of the house where I was staying, he certainly looked at the point of death, all skin and bone; he could hardly draw one leg after another. But he was a fine big fellow, and I thought if I could get him cheap he might be cured, especially as it appeared to be mere starvation he was suffering from. Some natives keep elephants merely for the name of the thing, and just give them enough to keep them alive, and no more. "Well," I said to the man in charge, in reply to the exorbitant price he named, "go and tell your master his elephant is at the point of death. I may be able to cure him, but if left with you he must die. I will give so much, and no more." The man pondered a bit, and then said, "Well, sahib, I am not authorized to close with you except for the sum I have named, but I will go and speak to my master about it." "Very well," I answered; "and in the meantime the elephant may remain here, and I will see what a few days of my treatment will do."

'There was a large paddock attached to the garden of the house, and into this the elephant was driven. He dragged his wasted limbs along in a manner painful to witness, and finally, making a slip, he came down with a crash, and rolled over on his side quite helpless. For

three days he was fed in that position; warm mashes were made with coarse sugar and ghee, and rolled into large balls for which he would complacently open his mouth, and swallow them down with great gusto. At last I thought it time to raise him; so had a trench dug under his feet, and then, by using long poles as levers, we stirred him sufficiently to get his feet in the trench, and after a while, with a vigorous struggle, we raised him upright, and he tottered out of the ditch. After this he throve apace, though huge swellings came out over his body and limbs, the result of weakness and the change of diet; but in a day or two he was roaming all about the place, and used to come to the drawing-room windows and put his trunk in and gently wave it, asking for bread. Now and then the gardeners would rush in and exclaim that the elephant was making sad havoc in their beds of mignonette and sweet peas, and then I used to run out and catch him by the lobe of an ear and lug him out of the place; and this went on for some days, and he was becoming quite a privileged pet, when one morning Bussunta arrived with some of my baggage, and, as I was marching the stranger out of the flower garden by his ear, Akbar Ali rushed up to me and begged I would let him go. "Khodawund," said he, "I know that elephant well; he has killed two men already, and that is why they starve him. As soon as he gets in good condition he becomes *must* and dangerous. Don't have anything to say to him, I beg of you, sahib." Well, as the people to whom he belonged would not take my price, I sent him away, looking much better than he did when he came; but I suppose, poor fellow, he was starved to death at last.'

By this time they had reached the tope of trees where the elephants were encamped. All the mahouts were busy over a curious instrument, which was to take a

prominent part in the operation. A log of wood, about three feet long by eight inches square, was roughly dressed, and a hole large enough to admit freely a man's hand was cut in the centre, the border being studded with broad-headed nails. The elephant stood close by, seemingly taking an interest in the proceedings. He was a poor emaciated beast, and a great contrast to the plump Bussunta and others who were picketed around.

The log of wood was in fact a gigantic bit, which was to be placed in the patient's mouth, a sort of gag to keep his jaws open, and this after a feeble resistance was placed in position, and firmly bound with cords round his head. He was then made to lie down on his side, and his four legs were brought together and bound. One man then with the iron driving hook made him hold his trunk out of the way whilst Ramzan proceeded to operate; taking a small saw, after having first felt the position of the abnormal tooth, he passed his hand through the hole and cut off a large corner of the offending grinder. The operation was not by any means a speedy one, owing to the hardness of the laminæ of the molar teeth, but the poor beast, though it groaned and seemed to suffer, knew apparently that what was being done was for its good, and never attempted to resist. The operation was successful, and Ramzan Khan produced a piece of the tooth, conical in shape and about three inches square at the base. The elephant after this throve apace, and improving greatly in condition was sold for a considerable sum.

There is no domestic animal living which is so physicked and operated upon by his keepers as the elephant. Every mahout is more or less of a doctor, and the boluses, and mashes, and draughts that are administered are numerous. Periodically, too, their feet have to be

hardened by the application of a hot lotion. Constitutionally they are delicate animals, being subject to colds and inflammation, and various diseases which carry them off in a few days. Rangoon elephants brought over into India have to get acclimatized, and they not unfrequently fall victims to the change of climate. The mahouts say if they live over three rainy seasons they become hardened and are all right.

In 1859 we were quartered at a place where there was a depôt for elephants, chiefly of Rangoon, which had been collected for military service during the mutiny, and several elephants died whilst we were there, and one was born, the mother having been caught but a year previously. Of course it was a difficult matter to dispose of the huge carcases of those that died, and they were dragged away into a small valley, and there left to wild birds and beasts, and the operation of the seasons, to dispose of. It was obviously an unpleasant place to venture into, but thirst for knowledge led us to the place at times to examine certain bones and skulls; and then for the first time we understood the theory of the front shot of elephant hunters, who drop their quarry dead with a single ball. It is probable that of all the mammalia the elephant has the smallest brain in proportion to his huge bulk, the rest of his head being made up of cellular bone. We are accustomed to attribute to the large brain and bright honest eye, as of the horse and dog, the greatest amount of intelligence, but here we have in 'the huge elephant, wisest of brutes,' a very small brain and a ridiculously small and piggish eye; yet no nobler animal exists, nor one more subservient to the wishes of man. Caught in his native wilds, in less than a year he is performing his allotted tasks with almost human sagacity and more than human patience. Timid to a degree by

nature, he gains courage and self-confidence under man's tuition, and boldly withstands the most savage onslaught of a tiger. He has his fits of passion and repentance. We confess to believing that often-disbelieved story of the elephant at Lucknow, who, having in a fit of rage killed his mahout, was brought to his senses by the frantic widow throwing her babe before him, and telling him to finish his crime by killing them all. The story adds that the elephant seemed calmed down at once, and, picking up the child, gently placed him on his head, and followed the woman to the place where he was usually tethered.

How carefully an elephant lifts up his keeper to the seat of command on his neck! We never made our elephant kneel down, but mounted her invariably by the trunk. A pat on the forehead, and the head is bent down with the end of the trunk slightly advanced; the foot is placed on this, and the lobes of the ears grasped: at the word of command, *Dhur*, slowly the trunk and head are lifted till you can mount with ease on the neck or into the howdah. To get off we used to slip down a side rope.

Old Ramzan Khan, the performer of the piece of dental surgery just alluded to, had one day a struggle for the mastery with an elephant, a magnificent female, called 'the Begum,' or Princess. She had not long been caught, but was very tractable and promised to make a first-rate tiger-elephant. However, one day, when about five miles out of the station, she took it into her head to rebel. She had only a pad on her back, on which was seated a young Englishman, and Ramzan was in the usual driving seat on her neck. Suddenly stopping she shook herself so violently as to upset the traveller, and then she turned her attention to the driver. Shaking was, however, of no avail; then she tried to get at him with her trunk, but this was impossible; finally she threw herself on her side

and tried to crush him by beating her head against the ground; but her shoulder and the contour of her head protected the mahout's legs, and as she came down he swayed his body up, showering a rapid succession of blows with the sharp steel *hankuss* or driving hook, till the blood poured from a hundred wounds. At last she gave in, and seemed perfectly under command again, when Ramzan invited his master's friend to remount. This, however, he declined, and preferred to walk on to the next village of Bundole, where a horse awaited him.

The Begum never tried to rebel again, but a few months after she died suddenly, a victim to one of those rapid elephantine diseases; and great was her loss, for, in addition to her stature and beauty, she had shown great courage, and had all the qualities necessary for a good shikaree-elephant.

We have said that the autumn is a slack time for hunters, but we speak of ordinary hunters, not the hunter-naturalist; for him all seasons have somewhat of interest, and though large game may be more difficult to get, yet every day adds to his store of knowledge.

At five o'clock one cloudy morning our two friends walked down the main road on the Nagpoor side, with their horses and gun-bearers following them; their course lay along the bank of the Dul Sagur tank, which was now full, and in the rushes by the edge sported many a little downy dab-chick and glossy gallinule. But what attracted the attention of the Englishmen most were the stately pelicans that breasted the waters like swans. Perhaps some may object to the comparison, but though the pelican may lack the grace of the other, still on the water he is a handsome and stately bird, and as he and his family swim about amid their smaller neighbours, the coots, widgeons, and teal, they look like ponderous men-

of-war surrounded by fleets of graceful yachts and pleasure boats.

'See,' exclaimed Milford, 'that big fellow yonder has got a fish; but how easily he managed it—just plunged in his bill and spooned it out!'

'Yes,' replied Fordham, 'he did it neatly; but the pelican never dives, he gets what prey he can at the surface, and the natives say that an oil exudes from his skin which allures the fish within the reach of that capacious bill.'

'That's lucky for him if he cannot dive after them.'

'Well, if it be the case, it is only one of those many marvels of a Divine providence which brings food to the very mouth of those who otherwise, by their peculiar formation, could not chase their prey. Take, for instance, the devil-fish or fishing frog (*Lophius piscator*), whose luminous feelers attract by their phosphorescence the unwary fish to the very portals of the enormous jaws that lie buried in the mud. The fascination of the snake's eye which paralyses the bird is another case in point.'

'Do you believe in that?' asked Milford.

'Why not?—what a common expression it is, "rooted to the ground with horror!" Many have felt the sensation of inability to fly under extreme terror. I fancy if you were to find yourself in a room with a dragon of old, or with the sea serpent which periodically appears for the edification of old women in England, you would be as bad as the bird with the snake's eye on it.'

'Well, I have felt something of the kind in a moment of great peril, a sort of paralysis of the nervous system for a time, and I should not care to be experimented on by a dragon of Wantley or the last new sea serpent vouched for by legal affidavits; those hydrophidians

seldom appear in any form but on paper, with at times a fancy sketch.'

'I am not sure,' replied Fordham, 'that such creatures are myths; the marvels of the deep are by no means exhausted, and I hope yet to see one of these monsters, "resurrected, and dissected, and hung up in a *h*anatomical museum;" but what throws the greatest doubt on their existence is the reputed immensity of their bulk when found, whereas there are no intermediate gradations of large serpents better known to naturalists. Generally throughout the animal kingdom there is a sliding scale of size, but here you take a jump at once from a conger eel, which is about the largest wriggler in the deep sea I know, to a reptile about ten times—nay fifty times—the length of the largest known boa constrictor. The common sea snake of the Indian Ocean, the *Hydrophis palamoides*, is but a small fellow, from two to three feet in length, though a nasty venomous varmint.'

'Are they like ordinary land snakes, or have they fins?' asked Milford.

'No, they have no fins, but the tail which is round in the land snake becomes flattened and broad in the hydrophis. I have found them frequently in the Bay of Bengal. The head is decidedly of the venomous type, bulging out behind the eye, the ace of spades shape in fact; in colour they are yellowish, broadly banded with black. They are rather sluggish when out of water, and my mungoose Pips, who was with me on the last occasion, thought very poorly of them, for, after having tried in vain to get a fight out of them, he contemptuously went up and bit their heads off.'

By this time the friends, talking as they went, found themselves out in the open country outside the town. The husbandmen were busy with their ploughs, rude

wooden things, in shape something like an anchor with the shaft set askew with the flukes, drawn by a couple of miserable little bullocks. But the heavy rains had softened the soil, and the wooden ploughshares, made of the hard babool[1] tipped with iron from Pukhara, turned over the rich brown earth, and played havoc with the purple balsams that grew thick over the fallows.

'What is this?' asked Milford, stopping to look at a plant whose broad green leaves terminated in spathes of delicate pink, enclosing small yellowish florets.

'That,' replied Fordham, 'is called by the Gonds "keokanda,"[2] and is one of the numerous roots they eat; if you will take the trouble to dig it up, you will find a large tuber, which, however unpalatable and insipid to an Englishman, is not despised by the natives.'

'It is a sort of yam, I suppose.'

'No, the yams are all creepers, and there are plenty of them in our jungles; but let us mount and ride on. We may pick up a sambur or something in the valleys yonder.'

Taking a gun apiece they sent back their followers, and set off at a hand canter towards the woods. The morning was fresh, and cool fleecy clouds drifted across the sky, and there was a lightness in the air that made the younger sportsman feel inclined to brandish his gun over his head and shout like a wild Arab, as they swept over the turf-clad laterite beds that skirted the hills. Down to the southward and westward lay fields of black cotton soil, to gallop over which, saturated as it was with water, would to a certainty have lamed their horses; but here the ground was firm and hard, and rang to the hoofs of Cossack and Brownie as they kept stride by stride together. At last they were pulled up at the entrance

[1] *Acacia indica.* [2] *Costus speciosus.*

to a little grass-grown valley between two low ranges, and the riders proceeded with more caution. The hills on either side were composed of trap boulders thickly covered with scrub jungle, at this time of the year densely matted with creepers.

'There, Ernest,' remarked Fordham, pointing to a bush which supported a vine with heart-shaped leaves, and small, insignificant, greenish flowers in racemes, 'there is the wild yam; it is common all over these jungles, and when hard up for food I have eaten it, though it is but poor stuff; when cultivated, however, it improves greatly in size and flavour.'

'I thought yams were bushes with tuberous roots.'

'No, they are all creepers. Hola! halt!'

'What is the matter?'

'Only a blue bull down the hollow there. Shabash! there are two of them and three cows,' continued Fordham, scanning them through his pocket glass. 'Take it easy; not too fast. Let us ride gently down towards them, and then you take the one to the right whilst I tackle the other.'

It was some little time before the nylgaie perceived the approaching horsemen, and when they did they stood stupidly gazing for a while, when, finally realising their danger, they wheeled round and dashed down the valley.

'Ride!' shouted Fordham, putting spurs to his horse.

'*En avant!*' echoed his young companion, eagerly dashing forward. Away they all went at racing speed, for the course was short, and they knew that if the bulls once got into the rocky jungle beyond they would be safe, and their only plan was to blow them before they could get amongst the rocks. The running lay between two low hills, beyond which was an open stretch of country ascending gently for about three-quarters of a

mile to another low range running at right angles with the glen along which they were going.

Once out in the open the herd divided, one bull striking off to the left by himself, and the other with the cows, hotly pursued by Milford, inclining to the right. The ground was rather heavy, being a mixture of brown soil rendered soft by the rains and trap boulders; but Milford's light weight and Brownie's powerful limbs soon rendered it apparent that another half-mile would decide the bull's fate. The cows had already dispersed, and finding themselves unpursued had halted a short distance off, and were gazing at their flying lord. Milford heard the sharp crack of Fordham's rifle, and half turning for a second in his saddle he saw his companion's quarry fall heavily on his head and roll over lifeless, and the next moment he felt himself flying through the air and rolling over likewise; but luckily he was unhurt though severely shaken, and, after seeing some thousands of stars dancing about for a few seconds, he jumped up and hurriedly examined Brownie's knees, and finding them all right—the horse having pitched upon his head and shoulder, both of which were slightly cut—he mounted again, and tore after his blue bull, who had now got a fair start of him. His fall, instead of cooling his courage, seemed to give him increased energy, and as the bull gained the rocky hill-side, Milford dashed after him at full speed.

'A good horse can follow wherever a blue bull leads,' he said to himself, as he scrambled over the boulders and forced his way through the thick scrub. He strained every nerve to keep the animal in sight, knowing that if he once disappeared in the thicket it would be a great chance if he ever got sight of him again. The crest of the hill was gained, and the pursued showed evident signs of distress. Down they dashed over the precipitous

descent on the other side, and they were near the bottom when suddenly the bull seemed to sink into the earth, and before Milford knew what he was about he found himself on the brink of a nullah, with a drop of about ten feet. However, there was no time for pulling up, or avoiding the leap, and, with the consolation that the bull had safely done it, he went at it. Down they came in the sandy bed, with a stagger that brought Brownie to his knees, but, pulling him up, Ernest drove the spurs in, and, lifting him with a scramble out of the ravine, pressed on. The country became more level and the jungle thinner, and the horse, though much distressed, gained rapidly on the nylghau, whose laborious breathing told that his race was over. Suddenly he swerved, and, wheeling sharp round, came at the horse with a determined charge. Milford met him with a shot that missed as the horse sprang aside, and he overshot the place before he could pull up. As he wheeled round the bull was still standing panting for want of breath; Brownie, too, was quite done up, and his rider jumped off to get a steady aim. It was an unfortunate move, for as he raised the rifle to his shoulder with the bridle loosely hanging over his right arm, the frightened horse threw up his head, and the bullet sped wide of the mark. The delay had allowed the bull to recover, and the young sportsman had the mortification of seeing the animal start at the shot, and plunge once more into the thicket.

That bull was lost to him for ever, and he thought it was hard lines after the perilous chase he had had; but still he felt some compassion for the poor creature, who after a severe struggle for life had made a gallant stand, and deserved his liberty.

So Milford turned to poor, panting Brownie, and loosened his girths, and sitting down beside him he thought

he would give a five-pound note for a bottle of cool soda-water, if he could only get one; his mouth was as dry as a lime-kiln with the heat and the excitement of the chase.

How is it that on such occasions one always thinks of cool champagne cup, or Gunter's ices, or other things which are quite out of reach? It is the tantalizing vision that tortures the poor wretch who sinks to die on the sands of the desert—the mirage of cool, refreshing streams, and palm trees reflected in the bosom of placid lakes.

Milford thought of a friend of his, a fellow-passenger to India, to whom he had paid a visit a few days after his arrival in Calcutta. 'Well, Spelter,' he asked, 'how do you like India?' 'My dear boy,' replied the other, taking a pull at a long tumbler full of iced brandy and soda, 'it is the finest country in the world—*for a powerful thirst!*'

Thoughts such as these passed through poor Ernest's mind as he sat with his dry tongue rattling against his palate. Cooper's effervescing thirst lozenges were unknown in those days, at least to Central Indians, and so he tried the old hunter's plan of chewing a leaden bullet. Cooper's lozenges may be better; a leaden bullet in our estimation is not quite so reviving as a mint julep or sherry cobbler.

After half an hour's chewing of the cud of reflection and the above nutritive substitute, the disappointed youth adjusted his saddle, and rode slowly back to the place where he left his comrade. He found Fordham sitting on an old stump, making a careful drawing in his pocket-book of a beautiful sweet-scented white convolvulus, the *Reevia bona nox*, which trailed over a portion of the fallen tree. Cossack was tethered close by, and Milford looked round, but in vain, for the dead blue bull which he had seen knocked over. Thinking that some villagers had

carted it away, he proceeded to relate his own misfortunes, and, when he had come to an end, Fordham remarked with a smile—

'Then we have both been unlucky.'

'How so?' asked his companion; 'I saw you knock over yours.'

'Yes,' was the reply, 'and he knocked me over in turn.'

Fordham had, as Milford saw, ranged up alongside his bull, whose stride was not equal to Cossack's, and as he delivered his fire the animal fell to all appearance stone dead.

Fordham dismounted and felt for his knife, but found he had forgotten it; however, life in the nylghau seemed extinct, and as there was no convenient seat handy he sat down on its body, and striking a light lit a cigar, and waited for his young companion. He had been seated about ten minutes, when he was violently thrown forward, and a well-planted kick on his back gave him an additional roll over in the mud, and as he rose to his knees he saw to his astonishment his late victim galloping off towards the thick jungle.

Fordham stared in blank amazement for a time, and then snatching up his rifle pitched it forward and fired, but with what effect he was doubtful, for the nylghau soon entered the thicket and disappeared.

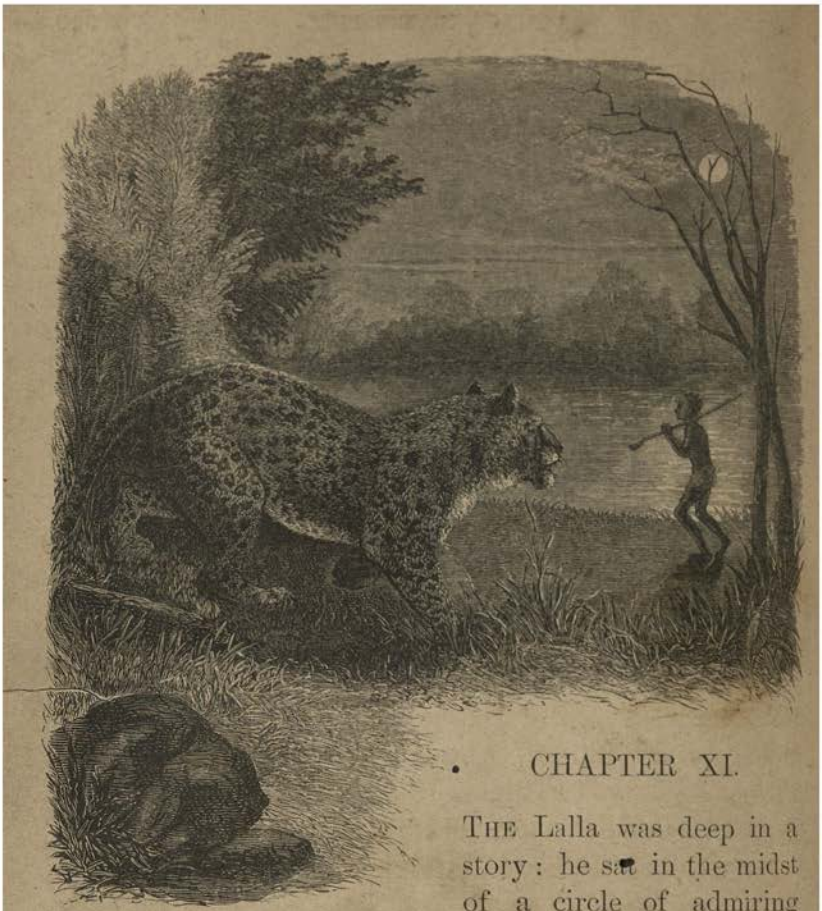
'Many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip,' said the Englishman with a laugh, as he lighted a fresh cigar, and, walking to the broken stump, took out his sketch-book. But he felt certain he would get him at last; his rifle generally made a lasting mark, and it was, he knew well, but the last dying struggle of the creature. Animation had been but temporarily suspended, and with returning consciousness came the effort to escape.

'Shall we track him up?' asked Milford.

'It matters not,' replied the other; 'let us ride home, it is past breakfast time. I will send Nusseer Khan with Bhoora, and the dog will find him. He is dead by this time.'

And so he was, and they brought him in that night.

PARADOXURUS.



CHAPTER XI.

THE Lalla was deep in a story: he sat in the midst of a circle of admiring listeners; his mobile features working with excitement as he proceeded, now with skinny finger extended telling off the various points, now with bated breath describing the supernatural, and then with fierce gestures declaiming on the prowess of his hero in battle. He had an appreciative audience, for anon a low-toned *ah, ha!* would run round the group as he touched on some thrilling scene, or an eager *wah!* or *shabash!* followed a bold stroke of war or diplomacy. The stolid-looking Gond, the quick-eyed, soldierly Pathan, the credulous Hindoo, all sat agape as marvel after marvel poured from the lips of the *improvisatore*.

The natives of India are not a whit behind the Italians in their love for romance, and the reader will not, we think, be a loser if he will take the trouble to skim over the marvellous tale which Fordham jotted down from the Lalla's lips and added to his collection. The heroics of the Maha Bharut and the exploits of Alha and Oodul, the fabulous warriors of the Chundelee Rajpoots, are sources never failing of delight to the natives, and the man who can commit to memory several hundred stanzas, and can sing-song them to the monotonous accompaniment of the drum, always commands a respectful and admiring throng.

Our two friends had just paid a visit to one of the most romantic spots in the district—the old hill-fort of Amodagurh, which we mentioned once before as the haunt of bison. The ruins which are now enveloped in dense forest are supposed to have been one of the favourite residences of a certain famous queen of romance, called 'Sona Ranee,' who having failed in marrying Pirthee Raj, the last Hindoo King of Delhi, was carried off by Alha and Oodul. Whence the sources of the Lalla's story we know not, but it was evidently gathered, as were many of his legends, from the Chundelee Rajpoots and Bundelkundee shikarees with whom he associated. He had, as we have stated, a rare knack of extracting every kind of information from the people amongst whom he wandered, and with a lively imagination, superadded to a retentive memory, he managed at times to spin most wonderful yarns, to the great delight of his comrades round the evening camp fire. Both Fordham and his companion liked to get within earshot of these *al fresco* entertainments, and whilst the younger sportsman took down with his pencil the varied expressions of the listeners, the elder made notes of the recitations, and on this occasion this is what he heard.

Legend of Raja Chand Sa and Raja Pirthee Raj, and the Hundred Headless Horsemen.

Listen, brothers—ye who have seen this day the ruined walls of the palace of the beautiful Sona Ranee, and doubt not when I tell you the story of those times. Permessur is great, and he knows what is true and what is false; but this I know, brothers, that those were wonderful days, and men were as giants, and there were magicians and holy men of great power, and the gods appeared to men and gave them their help. Ay! did not Bhyroo appear to Raja Sungram Sa, on the banks of the Nerbudda Maie, when he struck off the Gosain's head into the cauldron of boiling oil? And didn't he promise him the sovereignty of the fifty-two provinces, which he afterwards got? Then there were warriors in those times—bah! now we have none such; one of us nowadays, even a *pehlwān*,[1] would have no more chance against one of the old stock than a *Bhojpoorea latthial*[2] would have against a rhinoceros (this with a pawky leer at Ram Deen, a syce from Bhojpoor, who affected an iron-bound bamboo staff, and who now joined good-humouredly in the laugh against him).

I speak of the time of Raja Pirthee Raj, King of Delhi. Yes, brothers, in those days Delhi was a great place. After him came the Moghuls, and they thought they would make it grander still, but (with a wink at the Pathans) what did they do? they built the Kootub Minar, and Mahomed Shah Toglugh tried to build a city, and failed, and they made some musjids and tombs; but no one now knows of the grandeur of the city of Raja Pirthee Raj; and who has not heard of the famous iron latth, or

[1] A champion wrestler. [2] Clubman.

pillar, that stands up like the stem of a tall palm, and whose foundations not even the sahib logue, who know everything, can discover? Yes, brothers, the sahib logue say the world moves round on a pivot, and that latth, brothers, is the pivot on which it turns. ('Wah! wah!' from the audience, in which Fordham ironically joined.)

The walls of Raja Pirthee Raj's palace were inlaid with gold, and the doors were of massive silver, and nuggets of gold lay strewn about, so that no one should turn away from the place empty-handed; one thousand Brahmin cooks prepared food daily in the royal kitchens for the poor.

His soldiers numbered more than one crore [1] of footmen, and one hundred thousand horses stood saddled in his stables. ('Wah! wah!') Who could count his elephants and camels? Brothers, you might as well pick all the pebbles out of the Nerbudda Maie.

Well, brothers, it is said that the Sona Ranee, whose fort is above us, was the favourite queen of Raja Pirthee Raj—('You are wrong there, my friend,' muttered Fordham)—and she was the most beautiful woman that ever lived; but after all it was doubtful whether her daughter did not excel her. At all events the bards who sang the praises of the daughter of Raja Pirthee Raj sang in such strains, that the mere description of her beauty maddened hundreds of princes, who sought, but in vain, for her hand in marriage; for who in those, or any other days, was a fit suitor for the hand of the daughter of Raja Pirthee Raj?

Raja Chand Sa, brothers, was a poor prince, but he came of an old stock, older and more noble than even Raja Pirthee Raj, by whom his father had been greatly.

[1] One hundred lakhs—i.e. ten millions.

despoiled. His lands barely sufficed to keep up the dignity of his house, and as for retainers, except a few Thakoors who owed allegiance to his father, and still gave him a sort of service, he had none beyond the household domestics. What was the good of such a man, young and brave and handsome as he was, setting his affections on the daughter of his king? By what adverse fate had a wandering minstrel accepted the hospitality of the generous but impoverished prince, and repaid him by describing in glowing verse the loveliness of the Princess Seeta? It was destiny, brothers, destiny; who can escape it? What is written on our foreheads must come to pass! ('Ha-*n* ha-*n*, such hai, such hai'—'yes, yes, it is true—it is true.') From that night Raja Chand Sa refused food; he visited the court of Delhi in disguise, and hung about to catch a sight of the princess; he lived but to sigh; he lurked about the palace gardens by day and roamed the woods at night. Sorely he bemoaned his fate. Ah! if the inheritance of his fathers had not been wrested from him, he might have gone up to Raja Pirthee Raj and made his request in princely fashion; but now! what remained to him but his sword and death?

Well, brothers, one night as he was wandering dejectedly in the woods, he heard a great rustling in the bushes, and a beautiful green snake darted across the path. Raja Chand Sa thought the creature's eye turned to him beseechingly as it passed; but his attention was drawn off to a huge black serpent, with fiery red eyes, that sprang on in pursuit of the other. Something told Chand Sa that this was an enemy, and like lightning his sword was out, and the head of the reptile lay snapping its fangs at the grass on the roadside. At that moment a beautiful peri stood by the side of the astonished raja—('Wah!').

Laying her hand on his arm, 'Raja Chand Sa,' said she, 'you have saved me from worse than what you mortals call death. I was the green snake, and had the evil spirit whom you destroyed overcome me, I should have been entombed inside him, living and yet dead, till some one qualified to liberate could come to set me free; for it is not every one, prince, who could do what you did. Any other warrior but yourself would have failed, and death would have been the result. A virgin blade of the purest steel, wielded by an unmarried prince of unblemished lineage, prepared by a fast of seven days for the work in hand, were the conditions. Judge, therefore, how opportune was your arrival, sent by Indra himself. Now,' continued the peri, to whom the raja listened with respectful attention, 'I can do you some service in return; though, alas, it will not do you much good! however, no one can avoid his fate. You wish to see the Princess Seeta? Shut your eyes, nor open them again till I tell you.'

So saying she laid two fingers on his eyelids; a cool wind played about his temples, and he felt as though he were in a swoon, when suddenly the light pressure on his eyes ceased, and the voice of the peri told him to look up. To his amazement he found himself in a spacious room, built of the purest white marble. The light flickered through lattices of the most delicately carved stone, pierced in a manner like the intricate design of costly lace-work; the groined roof was richly gilt, and all round the room was a deep border of flowers of every hue inlaid in the white marble, composed of precious stones of inestimable value, designed and executed by workmen brought from far countries on the other side of the black waters.[1]

On a golden *charpai*,[2] covered with silken bedding

[1] The sea.

[2] Bedstead (literally, four feet).

embroidered with pearls, lay the Princess Seeta, the most beautiful being in the world. On her forehead, fixed in a golden band which confined her hair, blazed a diamond of immense size, as big as an egg. ('Wah! wah!') Yes, brothers, the sahib will tell you it is true; the Queen of England now has the stone, but on Raja Pirthee Raj's death it melted away to one-fourth of the size it was, for Krishna, who gave it to his forefathers, struck it with a flash of lightning as it fell into the hands of the Moghuls. The arms of the princess were covered with rubies and emeralds, and as her breast heaved with her sleeping breath, diamonds sparkled like the dewdrops on the leaves of the lotus. By the side of her bed was placed a stand of precious jade stone, on which stood a vase of rock crystal and a drinking cup carved out of a single emerald.

But Raja Chand Sa saw none of these things; his eyes were rivetted on the face of the beautiful princess, and one of his deep sighs awoke her.

She rose with a start, and, suppressing a scream, she gazed with astonishment at the handsome youth who, kneeling before her, poured forth abundant apologies for his intrusion. None of the suitors who had [illegible] for her hand had been so good-looking as this one, and she was not sorry when they retired disappointed; but now she thought she could listen for ever, and it was grief to them both when the peri, again appearing, warned them they must part. The princess added her entreaties to those of the raja that she would take them both away together, but she was obdurate.

'Ye know not what ye ask,' said she; 'the king, your father, is under the special protection and favour of Indra, and his magicians are mighty: they would soon discover that I had helped you to fly; you would be speedily

retaken, and I should surely be punished. Nay, what is written in your fate will come to pass. I know only of one who may help you, and to him, prince, will I take you.'

So saying she placed her fingers on his eyelids, and when Raja Chand Sa opened them again he was once more in the gloomy wood, the peri and his horse standing beside him.

'Chand Sa,' she said, 'we meet no more; henceforth another must guide thy destinies. I send thee to one who will give thee the means to conquer, if so be that Indra will permit it; only this will I tell thee: on the first day of the new moon the Princess Seeta will proceed to the temple to make offerings; if thou hast the power thou mayest carry her off. Farewell. Take the road yonder, and follow it till it divides in two branches; pursue the one thy horse chooses, till thou art stopped by a cliff; take then thy right shoe in thy left hand and throw it at the rock, which will divide; enter, and thou wilt find one who will direct thee.'

A ray of moonlight fell on the spot where the peri stood, and she was gone.

Raja Chand Sa mounted and rode slowly along the path, pondering on the events of the evening, and, with his heart full of the beauteous vision he had seen, he scarcely noticed that his horse hesitated at a point where the road forked; the animal felt inclined to take the one to the right, but a nightjar flew up with a scream right under his nose, and turned him into the other path. At last a huge rock barred the way; there was thick jungle full of thorns on either side, and the barrier was in front, so the horse came to a dead stop, and this recalled the prince to himself, and, remembering the instructions given by the peri, he drew his right shoe off with his left hand, and hurled it against the face of the rock.

Instantly, like huge doors unfolding, the stones parted, and a vast chasm yawned before him. ('Wah! wah! kya khoob!')

Yes, brothers. Drawing his sword the raja plunged into the gloom, leaving his horse at the mouth of the cavern. For some time he stumbled on in darkness, hardly knowing where he was proceeding, when at last a light like that of a star glimmered in the distance; it brightened as he approached, and then he found himself before a golden gate through which poured a brilliant light ('Wah!'); the door opened of itself for him, and he passed through into a vast hall, whose crystal roof and ivory pillars, capitals of which were studded with gems, glittered with dazzling brilliancy. In the centre of the chamber lay a tiger skin, and on it sat, with his legs crossed and his arms folded before him, in an attitude of meditation, a very old man—so old and shrivelled that he seemed to be but a skeleton with the skin drawn over it; his long white hair hung loosely over his shoulders, and his beard flowed down to his waist.

Raja Chand Sa sheathed his sword, and advancing towards the venerable seer made a low obeisance. For a time neither spoke. The old man never raised his eyes from the floor, nor altered his position, yet the prince felt sure his presence was known. At last with a deep hollow voice the magician broke the silence.

'I know thee, Chand Sa,' said he, 'and the wish of thine heart, and for thy sake and still more for the sake of thy forefathers, who were known to me, I will give thee the means of accomplishing thy design; yet the end of it is doubtful—there is a cloud over thy future which it is not even in my power to see through or avert. Raja Pirthee Raj is the favoured of Krishna, and it is only by the countenance of the gods that you can succeed.

Speak not a word, but listen to what I say. Thou requirest arms and money; return to thy horse, and thou wilt find a troop of one hundred men awaiting thee, all armed and mounted; they will obey thy behests even to death, and each one shall slay a thousand of his enemies before he falls. But first thou must thyself take off of each his head. ('Wah! wah!') The leader of this troop of horse will hand to thee a bag, from which thou mayest draw all thy needs, and if thou art sore pursued, ask him and he will give to thee the means of deliverance. If they suffice not, fate is against thee, and thou mayest not avoid it. Go, and utter not a word till the rock closes on thee again.'

Raja Chand Sa bowed reverently, and retraced his steps through the gloomy corridor and the portal of riven rock, which slowly closed as he passed out. He found his horse tethered where he had been left, and beside him drawn up in line stood a troop of cavalry; such cavalry, brothers, as no man had ever seen before. The riders were as giants, and the steeds they bestrode were of great size and power, and were jet black in colour. They saluted Chand Sa as he approached, and then remained motionless as statues, whilst their leader paid his respects to his new lord, who, after courteously receiving them, mounted, and rode off at their head.

Well, brothers, on the day foretold by the peri, the Princess Seeta went to make offerings at the temple. In the meantime, Raja Chand Sa, escorted by the hundred horsemen, made a formal demand of Raja Pirthee Raj for his daughter, but was laughed to scorn; so Raja Chand Sa remembered the day of offering.

The Princess Seeta's heart had become as water, brothers, since the night the peri had brought her handsome suitor; and her attendants wondered at her

thoughtful and sad mien and loss of appetite: the most delicate sweetmeats, such as she had been partial to, remained untouched, alike with the rarest fruits the royal gardens could produce. She spent her days in sighing, and tears wet her pillow at night, and only the vision of Chand Sa filled her heart; and as she travelled in pomp, borne in a golden litter from the palace to the shrine of the god, she strained her weary eyes through the loop-holes in the velvet curtains to see if Chand Sa was anywhere in sight.

The king's daughter travelled in great state, as you may suppose, brothers. There were guards and officers of the household; slaves bearing gifts of great value for the temple; female attendants in covered litters, and elephants and horsemen bringing up the rear, and all the people prostrated themselves as the daughter of Pirthee Raj passed by.

The route lay through a grove of large mango trees, and suddenly the sound of drum and pipe changed into shrieks and shouts, as a mass of horsemen, black and gigantic, charged down upon the procession as it wound through the gloom of the grove. But the Princess Secta recognised her lover in the leader of the troops, and her heart beat for joy.

Sooner than I can tell you, brothers, the escort was trampled down under the feet of those dreadful horses; and the blade of each rider fell like lightning, shearing through steel and brass, as sword and shield were raised in defence.

Raja Chand Sa sprang to the litter of the princess, and, after a few hurried sentences, he gave the order to move off rapidly, ere the alarm could be given and a pursuit organized. The black horsemen brought up the rear, and the prince himself joined them occasionally,

and cast an anxious glance behind, for he knew it would not be long before the armies of the offended father would be on his track. Onward they hurried through the heat of the day, not even stopping to drink by the wayside, nor to shake the dust off their clothing.

It was an anxious time, brothers, for Pirthee Raj was powerful, and beloved of the gods, and his magicians were mighty. But who knew? Perhaps Indra might permit the marriage, and then what could the king do? for even kings, brothers, have to obey the gods. ('Han, han! yes, yes! such hai! it is true!') Well, they hurried on, trusting that nightfall would cover their retreat; but, as I told you before, brothers, Raja Pirthee Raj had a hundred thousand horses ready saddled in his stables, and no sooner had the fugitives from the escort reached the palace than the squadrons were in motion.

At the third watch of the day the fugitives noticed, to their sorrow, a cloud of dust bounding the distant horizon in their rear, and before long the pennons of the advancing spearmen could be distinguished. Raja Chand Sa remembered the words of the aged seer, and calling to him the leader of his troop, consulted with him as to what was to be done. The warrior drew from a pouch a small paper covered with magical characters, and handing it to the prince told him to blow the powder it contained upward towards the heavens. Chand Sa did so, and instantly there arose such a dust storm as completely hid the fugitives, who took advantage of it and changed the course ('Wah, wah, bhaie!'); but as they were congratulating themselves on their escape, there came an ominous roll of thunder, then a vivid flash, and peal rang on peal as torrents of rain came down and beat the dust to the ground. This, then, had failed, and Raja Chand Sa felt as though the gods were against him.

('Ah-hā!') Yes, brothers, he thought so, but he still determined to do his best; for the gods love those who fight well and die hard ('Such hai, bhaie!'—'true it is, brother'), and with resistance success might be granted. So he consulted again with the old warrior, who was calmly scanning the long lines of the approaching hosts. This time the horseman took from his saddle-bow a bottle of water, and, putting his horse to a gallop, poured forth the contents in a line between the two forces. The earth suddenly divided, and a swollen river rushed between. ('Wah! wah! shabash, kya khoob!')

Yes, brothers, there was safety for them at last: who could cross such a torrent as that which foamed and tossed behind them as they sped on their way? Surely they were safe. But, brothers, Raja Pirthee Raj's sorcerers were mighty, and advancing to the front they invoked the aid of Krishna, and a vast chasm opened and swallowed up the river. ('Urré wah!')

'Illustrious prince,' said the aged leader of the troop, 'we must now appeal to arms. Call a halt then under these trees, for we must perform the necessary ceremony.'

So Chand Sa halted his party whilst the horsemen ranged themselves in a line. The veteran leader dismounting spread a carpet for the prince, and requested him to seat himself. After this he placed before Chand Sa a stool; then drawing his sword he presented it to the four quarters of the compass, and repeated an invocation, after which he handed it to the prince, saying, 'Strike, and fear not!' At this moment one of the horsemen moved forward out of the ranks, and reining up his steed before the raja bent his head towards him; the sword flashed in the air, and the head of the trooper fell on to the stool. ('Wah!') Then, brothers, like an arrow from a bow shot forth that headless warrior; like

a flash of a thunderbolt he burst on the advancing columns. Chand Sa gazed with eager straining eyes as he saw the foremost ranks break and fly as the relentless steel, driven by the arm of a corpse, sheared through armour and flesh like as the sickle of the thatcher mows down the reeds on the river-side. ('Shabash! shabash!')

Suddenly he saw the trooper reel and fall from his saddle, and at the same instant the head rolled off the stool! ('Wah!')

'His work is done,' said the aged leader in deep hollow tones.

Another horseman advanced and bent his head to the stroke. Once more were beaten back the forces of Pirthee Raj, as the hawk drives the trembling teal into the lake. A thousand more fell under the enchanted steel, and the second head rolled from the stool.

Who shall describe, brothers, the consternation in Raja Pirthee Raj's camp! but his astrologers bade him be of good cheer, for though his forces might be destroyed, still success would come. So legion after legion hurried to the front, though they rushed over a pile of corpses that swelled as a mountain before them, and breasted the rampart of carcases but to add to the pile. Well, brothers, there is no use in describing in detail the deeds of the hundred horsemen as each rushed on the foe; but it was all of no avail, the last warrior, even the aged leader of the troops, had fallen, and Raja Chand Sa gave up hope. Only death now remained, so tenderly embracing the weeping princess he sprang on his horse, and, flashing his tulwar in the rays of the descending sun, he dashed forward to meet his doom, when a piercing shriek arrested him. He turned in his saddle, and nearly swooned at the sight, for the beauteous Princess Seeta,

struck to the heart by her own hand, lay writhing on the ground in the agony of death. ('Hi, hi, kya zuloom!')

His first impulse was to throw himself on the body of his love; the second, which prevailed, to dash at the enemy. Weakened by the loss of a hundred thousand of his men, Raja Pirthee Raj's force had dwindled down to a mere body-guard, and through these, almost to the presence of his father's and his own deadly foe, Raja Chand Sa cut his way. Frantic with rage and grief he madly threw himself first on one and then another, and wherever his sword fell it was death. ('Shabash!') At last, just as he reached Pirthee Raj, one of the astrologers touched him on the head with his staff, and, stunned as with a lightning stroke, Chand Sa fell to the earth. ('Wah! wah!')

Raja Pirthee Raj would have put him to death then and there, but the Brahmins interfered and averted the king's intention, on the score of the prince's noble lineage and high caste; but, brothers, it would have been better if he had been put to death, for his heart was dried up for love of the Princess Seeta, and the king had his eyes put out and cast him into one of the lowest dungeons of the fort. ('Arré hi! hi!)

Well, brothers, after this Raja Pirthee Raj, who had no more children, wished to adopt a son, and a favourable selection having been made, great festivities were held in the palace. For days, nay months, brothers, there were perpetual feasts and revellings of all kinds; the fairest dancers in the realm were gathered together, and the bards assembled in crowds to rehearse the glories of the gods, and of Raja Pirthee Raj. There were fights between wild beasts, and the champion wrestlers performed prodigies of strength and skill; but, strong as they were, none of them could bend the bow given by

Krishna to Raja Pirthee Raj. This was the great trial of strength, and the raja promised an elephant-load of silver to the man who could draw an arrow to the head ('Wah! wah!'); but they all failed, and the raja laughed them to scorn.

The shouts of the revellers reached the ears of Raja Chand Sa, as, blind and sorrow-struck, he lay in a corner of the dungeon, longing for death to release him from his sufferings.

Every day the jailer came to bring the unfortunate prince his food, and out of compassion used to sit awhile and talk to him. So he came as usual, and told him how Raja Pirthee Raj had promised an elephant-load of silver to the man who could draw the bow to the head of an arrow.

'Go,' said Chand Sa, drawing himself up, and losing for the moment his attitude of deep dejection, 'go to the raja, and tell him there is one here who will draw his bow, ay, and send the arrow through six planks of wood.'

'Bap re!' replied the jailer, 'how can I go with such a message to the king? My lord wishes his slave to lose his head.'

'Go, then,' said the prince, 'to the Dewan Prem Raj, and tell him to convey my message to the raja.'

So the jailer thought this was the safer plan, and away to the minister he went and confided the challenge.

The dewan laughed. But he was anxious to see if the vaunt could be sustained, and he was also anxious that some amelioration should take place in the unfortunate captive's condition, whose high lineage and great misfortunes excited commiseration amongst all classes, and even amongst those courtiers whose self-interest required that they should show harshness towards him in the sight of Raja Pirthee Raj, the king.

So the Dewan Prem Raj went and told the king concerning the boast of Raja Chand Sa, and Pirthee Raj laughed loud and scornfully.

'What! have not captivity and chains and the bread and water of affliction tamed that proud spirit yet? Well, let him try; but if he fails, as he will do, he shall be trodden under foot by elephants.'

Then Chand Sa leaped for joy at the news, and stretched forth his arms to grope for the dungeon door, so eager was he for the trial; and the dewan and jailer looked amazed at him, so little did he resemble the bowed-down and dejected captive of the day before.

'Tis said, brothers, that as Chand Sa was led past the groves of the palace gardens a little green bird flew on to his shoulder, and, having twittered away for a few seconds, took again to flight, hovering round him. ('Wah!')

The king sat in the great court-yard with his nobles around him, whilst clouds of attendants hovered about with silver and gold maces and fans. Jets of rose-water were flung into the air to cool the breeze, and a thousand scents pervaded the atmosphere. On a table in front of the king lay the famous bow, made, they say, out of a gigantic horn of a rhinoceros, and on one side stood a group of warriors and wrestlers who had in vain striven to bend the celestial weapon.

A murmur of compassion and incredulity ran round the assembly as the tall figure of the captive prince, led by two warders, made its appearance at the foot of the court-yard; but there were some who did not fail to remark the upright bearing and elastic footfall which strangely belied the reported treatment of the celebrated prisoner. But, brothers, it was the last flare of the torch before it sinks into an ember; none could see into the

heart of Chand Sa, or feel the elation which gave him the false semblance of activity he wore.

The king, Pirthee Raj, noticed his bearing with anger.

'Ah, ha! blind one!' he cried, 'thy step is proud and free indeed to meet thy doom. Presumptuous man! the elephants wait to tread thee under their feet for daring to mock at the ordinance of thy king. Canst thou hope to draw the bow of Krishna when the strongest of the *pehlwāns* have failed?'

'Give me the bow, O king,' replied the prince, 'and place six planks one before the other in front of the target, and I will send an arrow through all.' ('Shabash!')

A cry of astonishment broke from the bystanders, and at the king's order six planks were laid on the face of the target, though how a blind man was to hit the mark was a subject for much comment and wonder.

Raja Chand Sa desired to be placed facing the target, and told the men in charge of it to shout aloud.

'He is going to shoot by the sound of the voice,' cried the spectators.

'Give me the bow,' said the prince; and it was handed to him by an officer of the court, together with an arrow, the point of which Raja Chand Sa carefully felt.

'Now let my lord, the king, give the word.'

'Shoot, blind one, shoot,' cried Pirthee Raj.

As easily as though it were a child's toy, Chand Sa drew the long arrow to the head, and wheeling rapidly round he discharged it full at the breast of Raja Pirthee Raj, who, struck through the heart, fell from his throne down the steps. ('Wah! wah!')

Brothers! how can I describe the confusion that reigned during the next few minutes? Some ran to pick up the king, others beat their breasts and stared, but did nothing; then arose the cry to seize the assassin.

He lay on his face.

They turned him over.

He too was dead.

There were some there, brothers, who said that the little green bird flew to him just as he pulled the bow, and that as he fell *two* birds of like plumage were seen to fly into the gardens, where they are occasionally to be seen to this day, flitting amid the fragrant flowers of the bela and harsingha; they were the souls of Raja Chand Sa and the Princess Seeta. ('Wah! wah!')

Brothers! I have said all as it has been handed down to us by our fathers. Purmessur only knows how much of it is true and how much false; but there are the ruins of the Sona Ranee's fort, which everyone can see. With which conclusive statement the Lalla took a proffered hookah, and was soon in a cloud of smoke.

'More romance than history,' remarked Fordham, as he shut up his memorandum book. 'Come, Ernest, it is time we were in bed, and then hey for the man-eater of Kahani!'

Chinta Gond possessed but an ill character amongst his people, and even the Hindoos and Mahomedans were averse to much intercourse with him. He was a *soda*, or one gifted with supernatural powers, could cast the evil eye, and had the power of turning himself and others into wild beasts. No wonder he was avoided, and he knew it, and traded in consequence on the fears of his neighbours; for he was a brave man indeed who would not give Chinta Gond aught that was in his house: flour or millet, *daroo* (spirit from the mouhwa flower), or the much prized, and not often to be freely got, salt—all were his for the asking, and there was never any lack of luxuries in his solitary hut, where, with his wife, he lived apart.

It was rumoured too that tigers were seen coming along the forest paths with offerings of meat for the soda's hut; certain it was that the flesh-pot often simmered on his fire, when the rest of the Gonds had but grain and roots to live upon.

It was late one afternoon when Chinta and his wife—who was about the only one who disbelieved in her husband's supernatural powers, for she had never seen them—were coming along from an adjacent village, and their path lay over some open country dotted with bushes, amongst which were grazing a herd of nylgaie.

Chinta's wife remarked that they had not had meat for some days, on which he told her that he had the power of giving her some.

'Look here,' said he, producing from his pouch a small dried root: 'hold this in thy hand. I shall turn myself into a panther and kill one of those nylgaie; when I return to thee fear not, but give me the root to smell, whereupon I shall resume my original form again.'

The poor woman tremblingly took the root, whilst her husband walked away, and was presently hidden by the bushes.

Soon she saw a huge panther cautiously stalking the nylgaie, and then a speedy rush brought the nearest of the herd down. The quarry was soon despatched, and the panther bounded back to the spot where the woman was left. Seeing the blood-stained monster approaching with mouth wide open, the poor creature's nerves failed her, and with a piercing shriek she threw away the root, and rushed blindly from the place.

The infuriated soda, for it was Chinta the Gond in the form of the leopard, hunted about wildly for the lost root, but in vain, when, frantic with rage at not being able to resume his human form, he bounded after his fugitive wife, and coming on her as she lay cowering in a

corner of his hut he tore her to pieces—the first of a long list of victims to his hate.

Such was the history of the man-eating panther of Kahani as related in the popular traditions of the country, and certainly everything in the career of this extraordinary animal tended to foster the unearthly reputation he had gained. Ranging over a circle, the radius of which may be put at eighteen miles, no one knew when and where he might be found; he seemed to kill for killing's sake, for often his victims—at times three in a single night—would be found untouched save for the fatal wound in the throat. The watcher on the high machaun, the sleeper in his cot in the midst of a populous village, were alike his prey.

The country was demoralised: the bravest hunters refused to go after him. Wild pigs and deer ravaged the fields: none would dare to watch the growing crops. If it had been an ordinary panther, who would have cared? Had not each village its shikaree? men who could boast of many an encounter with tiger and bear, and would they shrink from following up a mere animal? Certainly not; but they knew the tradition of Chinta Gond, and they believed it. What could they do?

On the morning of the second day after leaving Amodagurh, the two sportsmen neared Sulema, a little village not far from Kahani, out of which, it was reported, the panther had taken no less than forty people within three years. There was not a house that had not mourned the loss of father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or wife, or child, from within this little hamlet. Piteous indeed were the tales that were told as our friends halted to gather news, and the scars of the few who were fortunate enough to have escaped with life, after a struggle with their enemy, were looked at with interest; but the most

touching of all were the stories artlessly told by a couple of children, one of whom witnessed the death of a sister and the other of a brother—both carried off in broad daylight—for the fell destroyer went boldly to work, knowing that they were but weak opponents.

With hearts full of indignation, and firm resolves to do their best to rid the country of such a scourge, the Englishmen rode on. The morning was bright and cool, and the crisp air gave promise of the coming cold weather, for it was now towards the end of October, and at an elevation of two thousand feet the temperature was enjoyable after the steaminess of the rainy season. The birds were singing in the hedges, and chased the bright dragon-flies that flitted about; crickets chirped merrily in the grass, and all nature seemed joyous and bright, so different from the tales of woe and death just poured into the travellers' ears.

Fordham had been telling his young companion the legend concerning the dreaded beast, and went on to explain that it was the worst man-eating panther he had ever come across, and that the government had raised the reward on his head from ten rupees to one hundred.

'And yet that is but less than a shilling a life, if all one hears be correct,' remarked Milford.

'Just so,' replied Fordham, 'but it is sufficient; if you were to offer ten pounds a life it would not tempt the natives more. I believe no reward will tempt these superstitious creatures to stir in the matter, and yet, unless fortune favours us particularly, I do verily believe that it will be only by patient endeavour of the native shikarees that he will ever be killed: his extreme caution renders it most difficult to get hold of him. Even when he has seized his prey, the slightest noise makes him drop it and seek safety in flight, and this mingled

cowardice and ferocity have gained him his supernatural reputation. Alas! had I known three years ago what depended on one shot, what a number of lives I might have saved!'

'How was that?'

'Three times this very panther came out before me, and, but for the impression that a man-eating tiger was in the place where we were beating, I should have knocked him over. I was in camp at Dhooma, and a neighbouring thakoor sent word to say that one of his men had been carried off by a tiger. I went to the place, and took with me two elephants, one of which I posted up the nullah to my left, whilst the beaters drove a deep ravine on my right; in front of me was a small open patch. After a while out came a panther, and stood for a moment just in front of my elephant. I felt very much inclined to knock him over, but I thought of the chance of losing the tiger, and so let him pass on. He was driven back by the spare elephant and re-entered the beat, from which he was a third time expelled. After all no tiger appeared, and, on going down into the ravine to rescue the body of the man, I found to my disgust that it was the panther who had killed him—the brute who had thrice escaped my bullet.'

'What a sell!'

'Yes, it was more than a sell, it was a grave misfortune, for had he been then killed all these lives would have been spared, for the thakoor's man was one of his earliest victims. Ha! what was that?'

Fordham reined in his horse and listened.

'Did you not hear a cry, Ernest?'

'I did indeed, and as of some woman weeping.'

Again the breeze bore to them from a distant cornfield a piteous wail, as of some one in distress.

'That accursed creature again!' muttered Fordham, as clapping spurs to his horse he went off at speed in the direction of the sound, closely followed by his companion. At the door of a rude wigwam—such as the Gonds build for shelter whilst they watch their crops—lay the body of a fine stalwart man in the prime of life. It did not require a second glance at the four deep holes in his throat to tell how he had met his fate: the man-eater's mark had been well and surely imprinted there, and the struggle was but a short and sharp one. In a corner of the hut crouched a terror-stricken child, about four years old, whilst by the body of her husband the wife, a young woman of about five-and-twenty years of age, shrieked and tore her hair in frantic distress.

Fordham gazed sternly and sadly at the group. Milford, with the impetuosity of his age and character, wished to do something at once. The man had only lately been killed, was, in fact, yet warm; the panther must be somewhere near—why not send for the elephants and beat about?

'No use, my boy,' answered the elder sportsman, shaking his head. 'I know the brute too well; he is a dozen miles off now. I have known him cover a stretch of nineteen miles in one night; when he fails he makes a long run. Is it not so?' he continued, asking the question in Hindostanee of an old shikaree, who had just come up with a run after the horses.

'It is, my lord. Allah knows where he is now; perhaps killing some one in the Dhooma direction, for he has failed here, and he will try again, and has tried ere this—but not in this neighbourhood.'

Fordham put some questions in a kindly tone to the bereaved wife, and after she was somewhat calmed she told her piteous tale.

Her husband would come out to watch his crops; they were in prime condition, and did not he owe his mahajun money? So he would not let them be destroyed by the deer and wild pigs, and he laughed at her fears about the panther. For several nights all had gone well, but on this morning, just at the breaking of dawn, the watchful wife heard a rustle in some bushes close by, and stirring up the fire, she called to her sleeping husband and told him of her suspicion. Laughing at her for a foolish woman, who was frightened at the morning breeze playing with the dead leaves, he turned round again and went to sleep. She sat and watched; half an hour more passed, when a large animal burst into their hut, and regardless of the fire seized her husband by the throat, dragging him away struggling in vain. She sprang to his assistance, and, laying hold of her husband, shrieked loudly; the panther tugged at his throat, but she held on, and at last the man-eater dropped his victim, and springing into the bushes disappeared. But her husband was dead!

This was the sum of her story, told with many sobs; and few of her listeners heard it unmoved.

However, nothing could be done just then, and the sun was beginning to beat fiercely on the plain; the village of Kahani was yet some distance off, and at eleven o'clock there was to be a council of all the shikarees of the talooqa, to fix on some definite plan of action. So, giving instructions that the poor woman was to be looked after, Fordham rode off towards camp.

The Lodhee thakoor, or chief, of Kahani, was a fine-looking old man, not quite so stalwart, perhaps, as some of his tribe, but still he looked like the scion of an old house which boasted of an ancestry far beyond the days of Bukht Buland. He was dressed in the wadded green

ungurkha, or coat usually worn by his race, and bore over one sleeve a massive silver armlet, by which he was distinguished from his followers, many of whom resembled him both in features and dress.

He came forward to meet Fordham at the entrance to his village, and after the preliminary greetings and compliments, the conversation turned on the all-absorbing topic of the man-eating panther.

Milford looked round with somewhat of contempt at the fine soldierly-looking men around him, armed with tulwar and matchlock, and yet afraid of venturing out against this one cowardly foe; but then they were firm believers in the reputed supernatural origin of the animal, and superstition makes cowards of the bravest. In all probability, had not the foolish legend been promulgated, the man-eater would soon have met with his match, for the shikarees were not timorous as a rule, nor without experience; but, as it was, not a man would go after him, with the exception of a few Pathans from other parts of Seonee, induced by the reward offered by government.

At eleven o'clock the assembled shikarees, with the thakoor and the inspector of police, presented themselves before the tent, and the council was opened. Many a tale was told, first by one and then another, of the misdoings of the terrible creature. Such a list of tragedies was hardly ever before produced on such an occasion.

The thakoor related a case which had lately occurred in his own garden. A young Pathan, a government peon, passing through Kahani had to stay the night. At dusk everyone as usual retired within doors, and none stirred out after dark. A watch was set in each family, and sentinels hourly called from house to house. The thakoor's dwelling was a substantial building, and the

young man was advised to enter with the rest of the family; but the evening was sultry, and the peon, after the manner of a stalwart Pathan, was fearless, and laughed at the idea of showing alarm at a mere panther. 'Why!' said he, 'I could slice him in two with my sword as easily as I could a lemon.' What could be done when the man was so rash? It was his fate! All retired, and the door was closed, the young man remaining in the verandah. He kept awake till midnight, for the inmates heard him moving about and smoking his pipe. But the panther was there also, stealthily biding his time. At two in the morning they heard the young Pathan's death shriek, and rushed out to help him; but it was too late, he was dead!

Here the inspector of police broke in and corroborated the thakoor's story, adding on his own account some family history of the said young man, who was a distant relation of his own by marriage, throwing in at the same time broad hints of what he himself would have done to save him had he been at Kahani at the time, all of which tended to show that he was a man of very superior stamp to the ordinary run of even Lodhee thakoors, who are by no means a race oblivious of their own status amongst men, that is native men, putting the *sahib logue* out of the question. However, our worthy member of the Indian constabulary was not present at the time, and so his poor very distant cousin by marriage was lost. It is possible that the mere sight of our friend might have frightened away the panther, under the supposition that he was some species of nondescript bipedal pard, of superior stature and ferocity; for he had the most astounding set of whiskers, trained out in the right-angle fashion so highly thought of amongst his people. But somehow he did not take with Fordham, who turned

to the shikarees and commenced a close cross-examination, with a view to elucidate something regarding the habits of the beast they were in search of.

It was unanimously acknowledged that he had taken to preying exclusively on human beings, and that it was utterly impossible to tempt him by tying out baits either alive or dead; the latter even in the case of a man would be useless, for he was so suspicious that he made sure by the deep breathing of his victim that he was sound asleep before making his attack. Goats and ponies he would not look at, and the dummy of a man on a bed had been tried, but without success. What then could be done?

No one could say.

Where were his haunts?

The whole country was before him; no one knew. He was at Kahani at night, and at Dhooma in the morning; who could tell to eighteen miles where he was to be found? The only chance was to kill him over a bait, but what bait could attract him? He was a devil and not a mere animal; he knew every trap that was laid for him, and only a living man would tempt him.

The inspector of police here requested permission to make a few remarks, which being accorded, he proceeded to recount the evidence in a pompous manner, showing how accustomed and skilled he was in putting together the main points at issue, the *ergo* of which was that as nothing but a human bait would tempt the panther, a human bait must be provided. Now everybody knew that the gun of his honour, Major Fordham, Sahib Bahadoor, was as a slave in the hands of his master, that he had only to wish that the ball might strike even the eye of a lizard as it glanced over a stone, and it was done; had not all the world talked of it, and did not all Seonee

know of the antelope struck on the bound, and the tiger in the midst of his charge, and—— ?

Here Fordham stopped the torrent of compliment, and reminded him that he had some valuable suggestion to make, and as the time was short it would be better to proceed at once to business.

Somewhat disconcerted at the interruption to his ornate peroration, the worthy *thanadar* went on to state that it was necessary that the bait should be a man—a living man. In the days of former rulers this would be easy, but the justice and clemency of the British rule covered the face of the earth as the clouds cover the heavens in the rainy season, and where could a man be found? Still he had a suggestion, and may his fault be forgiven if it were displeasing to his lordship; but his lordship knew that the country was being depopulated, and everyone walked with bated breath, in hourly expectation of the arrival of the final stroke. Now, there were two criminals condemned to death for murder at that time in the Seonee jail. They were to be hanged by the justice of the *sirkar* for their crimes, but it appeared to him that under the circumstances they might be utilised to attract this man-eating panther. Far be it from him to wish them to be put to death *burkhelāf qanoon*, contrary to law; but, under the protection of his honour's unerring and death-dealing rifle, the beast would be stopped in his rush, and fall stricken at their feet. They would come to no harm, and might be hanged afterwards.

The pompous gravity of the proposer, and the preposterous character of the idea, so tickled both Fordham and Milford, that they could hardly keep from laughing outright. But the former composed himself, and answered that under the law no such utilization of a condemned

criminal was admissible, however advantageous it might be, and he was afraid that not even a special recommendation through the proper channel would meet with a favourable response from government ; but the idea was novel and ingenious, and he saw in it a means by which the worthy inspector could cover himself with glory, and achieve a great name, besides obtaining the favour of government (here the thanadar drew himself up, and pleasurable emotions swelled his heart and kindled his eye). They had all heard, continued Fordham, how the thanadar had stated that his rifle was as his slave, that his aim was deadly, and that therefore no harm could come to the person covered by such an unerring marksman ; now, though the government would not allow the unlawful use of a convict, still it might not object to anyone making a voluntary hazard, considering the exceptional character of the case ; and, therefore, if the thanadar would offer himself as a bait, he, Fordham, would take the greatest care of him, and would strike the panther dead at his feet, to his great glory and renown, and the blessings of the whole country, not to say the gaining of the reward. Come, now! would he do it? would he suffer himself to be tied out for one night? He knew that the sahib's gun never failed.

The poor thanadar's visage lengthened to such an extent at this unexpected turn of affairs, that the whole assembly burst out into laughter.

How could he do it? Perhaps the sahib's gun that never failed might not go off. Who was to feed his little ones? Everyone's fate was written on his forehead, and, after all, was not the man-eater a devil?—a transformed Gond?—a soda? His lordship would forgive him; he did not mind fighting openly for the *sirkar*, but a *shaitān* was too much for him.

'Well,' said Fordham to his companion, 'we can't

make an unwilling volunteer of him, like the Sepoy who said, when he was going to the Burmese war, "Han, sahib, hum bulumteer hai, muggur hum jané nahi mungta" ("Yes, sir, I'm a volunteer—but I don't want to go").'

At last it was resolved that a figure of a man should be made, and laid on a bed under a tree, with various cooking utensils lying about, as though a traveller had camped for the night; and close by his bed was to be placed a box containing a goat, muzzled so as to prevent its bleating, but that its breathing might confuse and deceive the panther. It was but a makeshift, and many of the shikarees shook their heads over it; but others were more sanguine, and none more so than the Lalla, who went vigorously to work at the dummy figure, which, as it progressed, caused great amusement in the camp, and as one of the Sepoys nicknamed it the Thanadar Sahib, the joke was made much of. As for that worthy, after the episode of the morning, he kept out of the way.

The day passed in these preparations, and at dusk the figure was placed in position, and very natural it looked as, rolled up in an old *resaie*, it was laid on a charpai, and the cooking-pots placed about. Poor Nanny was not put into her box till the last, when, after a good feed and a drink of water, she was muzzled and put under a chest, in which several air-holes had been bored.

The place chosen was at the foot of a huge tree, on the outskirts of the village, and in the branches was built a machaun for the watchers; into this Fordham, Milford, and the Lalla got shortly before dark, and anxiously awaited the result of their experiment.

Before leaving camp Fordham had cleared out a large tent, and made all the camp servants and followers sleep in it. At each door he had a large fire kept alight, and a

sentry with musket and bayonet on guard in both front and rear.

In this way several days passed. The experiment had failed, and the shikarees who had been doubtful all shook their heads more wisely than ever. The days were spent in scouring every nook and corner of the country, but not a trace of him could be found. One morning a herd-boy rushed frantically into the camp, saying he had seen the man-eater close by; but by the time the elephants were ready he had disappeared, and next day came a report of his having attacked a man seven miles off, who after a vigorous defence escaped with life. But his time was drawing near in a manner they wot not of.

Kurria Gond was a poor ne'er-do-weel of the loafing stamp. He would rather hang about pools of water or salt licks, in search of pigs and deer, than till the ground his father left him, and about the only well-cared-for implement of support in his house was an old matchlock which had been his grandsire's. With this he kept body and soul together; for occasionally a pig or nylghau would sell well amongst his more thrifty neighbours, who would give him corn and roots in exchange for meat. But times had been hard of late; Kurria did not care to sit out watching at nights when there was a chance of being devoured by the man-eating panther, so his trade as a hunter fell off, for day-shooting is never so successful in the native way as night-work, and he was verging on starvation. At one time in a fit of desperation, and tempted by the large government reward, he went off to watch for the man-eater; but then a report came of how another rash sportsman had been pulled down out of his tree and killed, and so Kurria's small stock of courage oozed away, and he gave up the hazardous quest. So Kurria begged for food and turned his hands to odd jobs,

and now and then got a pot-shot at a pig; but he was getting thinner and thinner, and, as the crops were bad and times hard, his neighbours could not be liberal.

At last, one day, Kurria could stand it no longer—food must be had, and if he could not eat it would be better to be eaten; so come panther, come shaitān, he would watch for pigs at all events till eight o'clock that night, by which time the moon would be going down.

So Kurria went off to one of his favourite haunts, and got into a previously dug hole, where he crouched down more closely than he had ever done before. As night came his teeth chattered and his hands shook, and every nerve was so strained that it is doubtful whether he could have hit a pig even if one had come before him. But luck was against him, and after some hours' weary watching, whilst the cold perspiration stood in beads on his forehead, he crept silently out of his hole, and, with many a furtive glance cast behind him, he made his way home. As he passed a small copse bordering a field of pulse, he saw a dark object moving about in the gloom of the brushwood; his knees knocked together with fright, and then came the consoling thought that this was a favourite spot for pigs, and where he had often seen them before. Surely fortune favoured him this time, and sent him a chance for food for many weeks. It was a pig—it must be a pig.

So he knelt down, and resting his matchlock he fired at the black shadow.

If Kurria was alarmed before, how much more did his hair stand on end and his heart leap into his mouth, when he heard the savage roar of a beast of prey, and the bubbling growl which told of a mortal wound!

The affrighted Gond fled with a momentary expectation of being torn in pieces, and he flung himself into his

hut before his astonished wife, the very picture of abject terror.

Mrs. Kurria was a bustling little woman, and a bit of a shrew; so, after hearing her husband's disjointed story, she rated him well for his cowardice.

What had he to be afraid of? Was he not safe and sound? And the animal might be a pig after all, and if it was a *cuteela janwar*, a tiger or a panther, did not the *sirkar* give a handsome reward? It was evident luck was in their way, and she should rouse all the neighbours in the morning, and lead them to the search.

Early in the morning the old dame was astir in the village, and had gathered a dozen of her friends, who, armed with spears and axes, headed by Kurria and his shrewish wife, set forth on the quest.

They approached the copse with considerable hesitation, and at last hailed a boy who was herding some buffaloes.

In a few minutes the unwieldy animals were slowly forcing their way through the brushwood, when suddenly their leader gave an angry grunt, and followed by the others dashed through the thicket, and then was heard the voice of the boy calling out—

'Here he is! here is the panther, dead.'

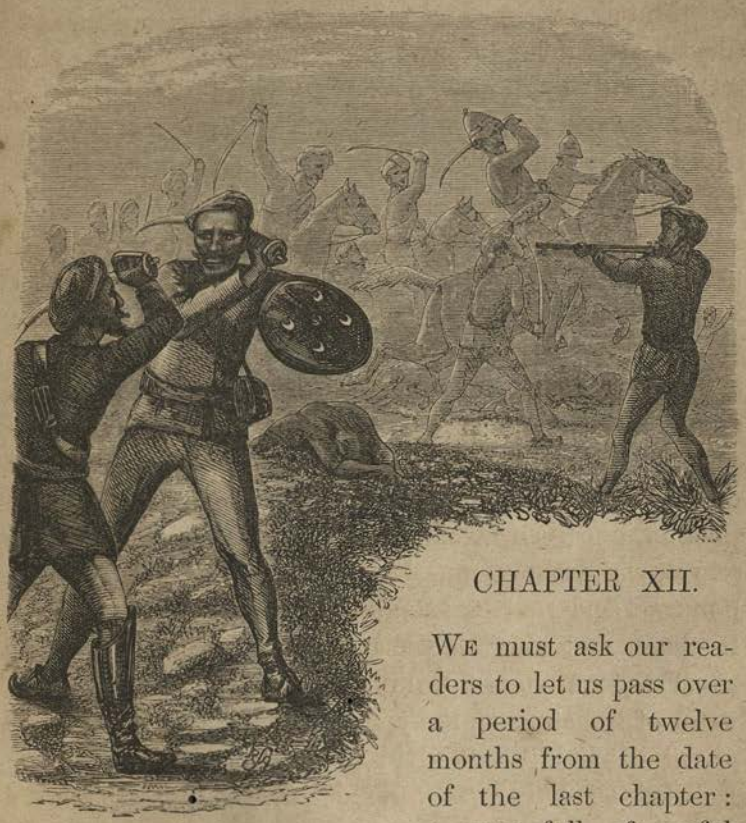
And so there was—a very fine panther shot through the heart.

An old villager, who approached the dead animal, now started back with astonishment, and, pointing with skinny finger and starting eyeballs, exclaimed—

'Brothers, this is the man-eater! See, there is the mark of the axe on his head where the Lodhee thakoor struck him; and there is the toe on the left foot gone, where that Seonee shikaree hit him with a knife when he rushed up the tree after him.'

'There,' screamed Kurria's spouse, dancing around like an old witch; 'there! did I not say to you that luck was in your way? and you ready to die with fright! Why, the *sirkar* will make you a rich man, and I shall have silver bangles, and all the country shall talk of you—won't they, brothers?'

A chorus of assent followed, and, poles being cut, the panther was carried home in triumph, and great were the rejoicings throughout the country when it was heard that the dreaded man-eater was no more. But Kurria's wife pulled a very long face when her husband came back from Seonee with only ten rupees, and said that the government ruling was, that the special reward was not to be given till six months after the reported death of the panther, and then, if no deaths had occurred in the interval, the amount was to be handed over. But good dame Sookea got her bangles after all, and Kurria lived in clover for a time on the balance of the money, and had great reputation as the skikaree who overcame the man-eater of Kahani.



CHAPTER XII.

We must ask our readers to let us pass over a period of twelve months from the date of the last chapter: a year full of awful interest, fraught with sorrowful reminiscences and gloomy presages—the memorable year of the Indian mutiny.

The storm was still raging, though there were brighter rifts in the clouds. Delhi had fallen, Lucknow was relieved, and people were beginning to breathe more freely. Still the tide of battle was rolling over the country, and many a pen was thrown aside for the grip of the sword-hilt. Still at the dinner table the events of the day were spoken of with bated breath, with the admixture of foreign tongues, and with the spelled-out names of places and people; for swart, impassible faces

girt the talkers, dark eyes watched every emotion, and silent listening ears carried garbled scraps of news to be retailed with every form of exaggeration in the bazaar.

It was not entirely without warning that the tornado had burst. The distant thunder had muttered and growled, and sullen flashes of lurid lightning broke over the horizon some time before the crash came. Some had predicted the storm aright, but others laughed at what they thought were absurd fancies, till at last it broke; and now that we look back to its causes and conditions, the wonder is that its area was so limited. We are not going to inflict a chapter of history on our readers, or recapitulate how we got possession of our Eastern Empire: how was first inserted the thin end of the wedge; how Clive and Warren Hastings drove it; how others poured on oil, while the successive strokes of Wellesley, Ellenborough, and Dalhousie buried it to the head, shivering the knots and riving the pliant fibre.

There was such a thing at the time of the commencement of our story as the court of Delhi—the court of the Great Moghul. What vivid pictures does not the phrase recall! Of Baber, the founder of his dynasty, a jovial potentate, equally ready for a fray or a frolic; of the great Akbar; of Jehangeer, to whom our British Solomon sent an ambassador; of the lovely Noor Jehan, whose history is a romance in itself; of the warlike and wily Aurungzebe. Those were great Moghuls, founders and destroyers of cities, before whom princes bowed trembling, as they sat on the jewelled peacock throne, of whom the monuments still remain in many a palace and mausoleum of surpassing beauty.

There was an emperor at the time of which we write seated on the throne of Akbar the Great; but what a shadow! what a phantom of an autocrat! A prisoner

within his palace walls; a pensioner of an alien race, who scrutinized his expenditure, and met his glance with a fearless stare; a poor, old, purblind poetaster, fated to be the last of the Great Moghuls! What a fate! It was not, however, all to be laid to the charge of the British. Inexorable doom had for years before laid its chill hands on that falling dynasty, and sapped it slowly but surely: the Mahrattas were even less lenient guardians of the imperial dignity than were the English. No, it was the decree of Heaven, and had the aged monarch had his will he would have cast from him the allurements of fickle fortune, content with what he had left of ignoble ease. But he had sons and courtiers who pined over the glories of the past, and whose traditions all stirred within them hatred of their virtual rulers and unquenchable longings for emancipation.

In olden times these white-faced foreigners cast off their shoes, and bent trembling before the throne of their ancestors; now they passed by with a sneer and a smile, and the descendant of Bâber had to humble himself before unknown, untitled Saxons. All this was gall and wormwood, but what could be done? There was yet a small cloud no bigger than a man's hand in the horizon, and their eyes fixed longingly on this. The country of their oppressors was engaged in a deadly strife with a powerful neighbour; the thunder of the cannon at Sebastopol reverberated through the marble halls of the palace at Delhi, and the eager listeners round the throne felt that each stroke of a Russian sabre made a dint in the heavy links of their shackles. Then cast they their eyes about. Who was on their side, who? Had not chiefs, who in former days swore to serve their fathers, grudges to bear against the dominant race? Was there no one who would draw the sword for the house of

Timor? Surely they were not the only down-trodden ones! Were there no treaties broken; no rights of adoption set aside; no ancient houses humbled in the dust even as they were? Ah! there is yet that which will humble the power of the arrogant British, there is discontent; let us look to it. Where is the lawful heir of the great Peishwa of the Mahrattas? has he got his own? The Ranee of Jhansie, has she no wrongs to avenge? and are the talooqdars of Oude the men to succumb quietly to a power which gives them a distaff and spindle in the place of sword and spear? No, Allah ho Akbar! the dawn is at hand.

Thus reasoned they within themselves, and set to work silently. Their emissaries, bound by religious as well as mundane obligations, traversed the country as mendicants, menials, teachers, and scribes; there was a network spread, each individual mesh of which was as it were a living snare eager for prey. Azimoollah, the confidant of that disowned adopted son of the Peishwa too well known now as the Nana Sahib, went to England ostensibly to urge his master's claims, really to spy out the nakedness of the land. The unsuspecting English *fêted* and feasted him after their usual manner, and the wily Asiatic, laughing in his sleeve, went off to the Crimea to judge for himself of our condition. There, thanks to our admirable administration, he learnt a lesson which he took to his own heart, in the ill-clad, worse shod soldiery, shivering in the trenches in the bitter Crimean winter. What a contrast to the jaunty-capped, cane-switching, smartly dressed warriors exhibited to the eyes of his own countrymen! Doubtless he wrote to the thirsting conspirators round that musty old throne in Delhi, 'Don't you believe a word of what you may hear to the contrary: these cursed giaours are thoroughly

beaten.' How they laughed in their sleeve when the guns of Fort William thundered for the fall of Sebastopol! A certain number of chiefs were gained over; now they must make sure of the army, without which their cause was hopeless. A portion was composed of co-religionists, but how were the others to be won over? They were Hindoos, and luckily of the higher castes; work *them* on a religious weakness—that is the way to do it.

How inscrutable are the ways of Providence! Here is a new cartridge ordered which requires grease. Spread abroad that the fat of pigs is used; that will touch the haughty Brahmin to the quick, as well as the Moslem. Through every secret channel dribble into their ears the same song: your religion is to be betrayed; the English have lost their power, and now strive by breaking your caste to bind you to them; will you be made pariahs? if not, rally round the imperial standard! So the current gathered strength till at last the banks burst—burst perhaps too soon, and perhaps providentially so for us. As it was, the disaffection was limited to certain chiefs and their territories, to certain districts of the North-west and Bengal, and to the whole of the native troops in the Bengal Presidency, with few exceptions. This was bad enough, but to say that the whole of India was in a state of rebellion is incorrect. The mass of the population was not opposed to us, else we had been driven out of the country; and in many cases we armed the people and led them against their insurgent brethren. The intriguers of the court of Delhi had counted too much on the antipathy which they themselves felt to the British. That antipathy was not national and universal, but partial. Some of the great chiefs were sincerely loyal; others played a double game, and temporized, waiting to join the winning side. The conspirators had hardly

reckoned on the neutrality of the Deccan—nay, more than neutrality, for that splendid Indian cavalry, the Nizam's irregular horse, did gallant service in our cause—nor did they count on the active opposition to them of the Sikhs and the Goorkhas: thus were they foiled at all points.

There was much of an inflammable nature in that part of India whither we have taken our reader. Nagpoor was the seat of a Mahratta prince, who was primed with substantial grievances akin to those of the Nana. The wilds of Sumbulpoor and Mundla had restless predatory chieftains, whose old tulwars, erst so red with the blood of the foe, were rusting ignobly in their scabbards. The Lodhee thakoors of Jubbulpoor and adjacent districts caught the infection of mutiny, and the 52nd Regiment of Native Infantry were for a time the masters of the Head-quarter Station on the banks of the limpid Nerbudda. The late Earl of Mar and Kellie, then Major Erskine, was commissioner of the Saugor and Nerbudda territories, and under his orders the Residency at Jubbulpoor was fortified and provisioned, and was the means of safety for the European residents of the place.

The history of the mutiny of the 52nd is instructive, as showing the complications of emotion which affected our native army—the mutinying as it were in spite of itself. That army was but an epitome of the nation. They err who say that the whole of India rose against us; likewise are they equally in error when they speak of the whole army to a man hating us, though almost to a man they rebelled. How much easier is it to organize a movement either for good or evil, amongst a coherent body like a school, a college, an army, or a navy, than amongst a diffused population! A band of mischievous boys bent on barring out an obnoxious master will carry

the whole school with them, of which a majority may be indifferent at first, and the rest reluctant; few indeed would you find strong enough to resist and be stigmatized as 'sneaks.' To a great extent it was so with the Bengal army. There was an active minority corrupted and bent on mischief; a large majority unwilling, reluctant to move at first, but gradually won over to the belief that they were being surreptitiously deprived of their caste—a civil and religious degradation of which the English mind has no adequate conception; and a residuum, small indeed, of strong-minded loyal ones, who in spite of taunts, jeers, and threats, remained true to their salt.

The regiments within the vortex of revolution speedily succumbed, but those at a distance were affected by conflicting emotions for some time. For some weeks after the disaffection of the whole native army of the Bengal Presidency had become an indubitable fact, the 52nd bided their time. The whole station was at their mercy, and they knew it, yet though they openly declared that the British rule was over, and they barely recognised the authority of their officers, they refrained from any overt act of rebellion, and it was not until after assistance had arrived, and guns and troops from the Madras side had assured safety to the Europeans in the Residency, that the 52nd one night took their arms, and, with the exception of a few resolute and faithful men, marched off to enrol themselves under the standard of the Emperor of Delhi, whose servants they proclaimed themselves.

Here again the behaviour of two detached companies showed the contradictory sentiments that prevailed. One detachment sent back the two European officers in command with every semblance of respect; the other dragged about the unfortunate subaltern in charge, and after various councils over him, at one of which it was

agreed to release him, they in the heat of the first brush with our troops left his mangled body for the victors.

It would not have been a matter for surprise if the Pathans of Seonee Chappara, the descendants of the stalwart warriors who, in the armies of the Moghul Emperor, had wrested a pleasant abiding place on the fertile plateau of the Satpura, had once again drawn the sword for their ancient monarchs. Was not every surrounding district in a state of anarchy, or held with difficulty by the British? Was not Seonee with all its rich resources at their feet, for what could the half-dozen English officers and the two companies of Madras infantry do? At the word of Mahomed Nujuf Khan, the descendant of Taj Khan, the Paladin of his clan, would not two thousand sabres leap from their scabbards? The Lodhee thakoors would soon follow suit; Bahadoor Sing was already in arms in the Jubbulpoor district, and his uncles in Seonee, Dheeraj Sing and Holkar Sing, were wavering. At this crisis, when the peace of Seonee was trembling in the balance, to the officer in charge of the district[1] Nujuf Khan went, and offered his sword and his influence in favour of the British. Who shall say when they read this little episode in history that gratitude is unknown to the Oriental, though it may not have an equivalent word in his native tongue? When the British took Seonee from the Mahrattas, they found the representative of the once powerful Mahomedan rulers in poverty and disgrace, having been dispossessed of the dignity of dewan. Although they could not restore him to the governorship, they amply provided for his neces-

[1] Captain, now Lt.-Colonel, W. B. Thomson; then of the 13th Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry, one of the few loyal corps, and the one which furnished the famous Bailey guard in the memorable defence of the Residency at Lucknow.

sities, according to his rank, by assigning him a fertile estate instead of the sterile talooqa of Dongertāl, and treated him with much consideration—a policy which bore good fruit in the unhesitating loyalty which Nujuf Khan showed in time of need.

We well remember the day when, under an umbrageous grove of old mango trees, the heads of the Pathan families assembled with their followers, to furnish a contingent for the defence of the district. It was a scene worthy of a painter: the English officer with but one young companion of his own nation, girt by a circle of swarthy Asiatics, armed with every species of weapon, which had been heirlooms since the days of Bukht Buland—broad-headed battle-axes and halberds, the old family tulwar and target, the ponderous zumboorka (a kind of blunderbus), and the long slender matchlock, the mace and the dagger. The leader and chief spokesman would have delighted the heart of Carl Haag, whose canvas never showed a more majestic warrior. Tall and portly, with snow-white beard standing out fiercely from his fine aquiline features, in the tiger-cat fashion already alluded to in these pages; dark flashing eyes, and a deep sonorous voice, that rolled round the assembly like muffled peals of distant thunder, as, gurgling forth his Arabic gutturals, he swore before them all that the last drop of his blood should be shed in defence of the British, who had restored the honour of his house! And in that dear old highland district, of which we never think but with affection, no rebel ever set foot save as a cringing suppliant.

We must crave our reader's pardon for this long digression; and return to the fortunes of our two friends, who at the time we have just been speaking of were far from the pleasant hills of Seonee. At the first note of alarm Fordham threw up his appointment, and was once

more placed under the military department for service in the field. Milford insisted on going with him, much against his earnest counsel. He pointed out to his youthful comrade the dangers to which he was exposing himself, both from the chances of war and of disease, and that as the only child of his widowed mother, and heir to considerable property, he ought to reflect before taking such a serious step; but the young man was firm. What would they think of him at home should he turn his back at such a time, and, seeking safety in flight, leave others to do what every Englishman was called upon to do—to strike home for his countrywomen that yet remained, and to avenge those that had been so foully slain? What would the one woman he thought and dreamt of think, if he came sneaking home to pull on lavender kid gloves over his delicately white hands, whilst others were reddening under the sword-hilt? 'No, no,' said he, almost parodying the words of the Moabite, 'where you go I'll go too, and by board and bridle we will keep together, whatever betide, as long as we can.'

A tear dimmed the other's eye as he gripped the hand of his young friend, and he said no more on the subject.

Fordham's irregulars had been chafing in idleness for a week at an outlying post of observation, where they were ordered to halt and guard a ford from the attacks that might be made on the convoys of tents and provisions which were being hurried on to the front. An enterprising rebel chief had already distinguished himself by capturing one of these, and was currently reported to be living in great state in the tents that had been intended for the officers of a regiment, which, marching hastily to the seat of war, was in daily expectation of them.

Over the distant ridge of jungle rose a conical hill,

whence faint wreaths of blue smoke rising into the clear morning sky, or the star-like glimmer of watch-fires in the murky night, tantalised the idling sabreurs, who knew that the peak was stockaded, and the valleys tenanted by the enemy they longed to have a dash at. But the orders were to wait. The general was encamped, and had been for two days on a strong position about ten miles ahead, and it was provoking to be thus stuck in the rear; but Smith's detachment had yet to join, and then an advance might be expected. So they waited and amused themselves as well as they could. Fordham had parades twice a day; for his men were all new levies and but rough and ready—brave fellows when well led, but with much to learn as yet of combined movements and military precision. Most of them were skilful and fearless riders, adepts at tilting at the tent-peg and feats of arms at speed, and in this he encouraged them as much as possible, both he and Milford joining in their sports.

The country round was undulating, and slightly wooded, and as nylgaie abounded they got an occasional run after a blue bull, taking care to go in a party of five or six, lest they should happen to meet with the enemy. Thus had well nigh a week passed, when our friends were having a rattling burst after a couple of fine old iron-greys, which they had separated from their herd. They little recked that they were going in the direction of the rebel camp. Some miles as yet lay between them, and they hoped to come to close quarters long before there was any danger of a collision. Cossack was in rare fettle, and carried his master like a bird; and as Milford pressed on after his bull, which took a diverging line of country, he heard the sharp crack of his comrade's rifle, which seldom spoke in vain. Before him lay a broad valley, with here and there a clump of *mouhwa* and *saj*

trees; it formed a sort of *cul de sac*, the upper end being barred by a well-wooded ridge, beyond which lay a river and a ford, and country road. The bull held on bravely for the thicket ahead, and Milford was calculating whether he could close with him before cover was reached, when his astonished ears were stunned by a sharp fusilade of ginjals and matchlocks, answered by the rattle of musketry, just on the other side of the hill. He reined up at once, and amid the strife of men the nylgaie saved his life. Again and again volleyed the ginjals, answered by a desultory fire, and then Milford recognised the bray of an English trumpet, and in a few minutes more the roar of artillery rang through the glen, and the grape shot hurtled over his head.

'Whew!' whistled the young man, instinctively ducking, though the iron hail hissed through the air high above him, being mostly ricochets. 'Those thakoors are getting fits now! I wonder where Fordham and the rest are.' So saying he dashed spurs into his horse and flew down the valley again. As he passed the fork of the glens where they had parted, he saw his companion's blue bull lying dead and alone, and as he spurred on in the direction of the camp he was hailed by name. Reining up and looking around he saw Fordham and two of his native officers with half a dozen men halted on a knoll, impatiently watching the progress of a trooper, who was galloping towards the distant camp with instructions for reinforcements.

'Ernest, my boy,' eagerly exclaimed the elder soldier, 'I was getting nervous about you, and never blessed my eyesight more than when I saw you rounding that corner. Why, you must have been right on to the rear of the rascals!'

'There was a good breadth of a hill between us, I am

thankful to say,' laughingly rejoined the other, 'and I stood more chance of being peppered by our fellows than by the rebels. What are you going to do?'

'I am afraid we can do nothing, for by the time the sowar can reach Martin, and give him my instructions, and the men arrive, the enemy will be *non est*; but I intend to make a reconnaissance, and effect a junction with Colonel Smith if possible. I suspect he got into an ambush on the river.'

He scanned the distant camp with his glass, and exclaimed, 'Bravo! we may have some chance after all. Martin has heard the firing apparently, for I see our men in saddle. I only want one troop though, and he must stay with the rest, which will be a disappointment to him, I am afraid. Ah! there they come at a trot. Now he halts and gets my note.'

'The firing still continues,' remarked Milford.

'Yes, but it won't last much longer. There is a little bit of ugly jungle about there, and I fancy that was just a last round or two to clear it before crossing the infantry again. I wish those fellows of ours were here; it is provoking to be hampered in this way when work has to be done;' and he stamped his foot impatiently.

The usually calm hunter seemed to Milford to have developed quite a new phase of character in the impetuous leader of cavalry.

After a searching interrogation of a native guide as to the geography of the country, Fordham rode on to meet his men, and placing himself at their head set off at a trot.

The two roads, namely the one by which the detachment was marching, and that guarded by Fordham, formed two sides of a triangle, of which the river made the base. The country thus enclosed was hilly and

covered with jungle, but the river meandered through a broad fertile valley practicable for cavalry, and it was supposed that the rebels, foiled in their attack at the ford, would fall back along the river till they reached the pass leading to their hilly stronghold on the left bank. So Fordham pressed on, hoping to come up to them before they turned up the defile.

It was nearly midday by this time, and the heat was getting oppressive; but the leader of the irregulars relaxed not the pace for a minute, and led the way at a swinging trot. The few villagers who were at work in their fields gazed wonderingly at the troopers, half uncertain whether to retreat or stand their ground, whilst the women and herd-boys fled, leaving their buffaloes wallowing in the roadside pools, which regarded the intruders with vacant looks, as anon they submerged themselves to the muzzle in order to drive off the troublesome flies.

On they went, trot, trot, scaring the egret by the lonely reaches of the stream, and the otter as he sat on the island rock plunged into the water at the unusual sight. Further on they surprised a herd of nylgaie, which dashed off for some distance, and then, finding they were not followed, turned, and intently watched the strange cavalcade, which held on their way on other aims intent.

'Walk!' at last cried Fordham, who hastily stopped the trumpeter, as that incautious youth was about to put the bugle to his lips.

'Halt!' came the next command. 'We can give our fellows five minutes' breathing time,' said he, pointing to a gorge in the hills to their right; 'there is the entrance to our friends' retreat, and it will be a pity if we cannot bar the way.'

'The firing ceased some time ago.'

'Yes, that affair was short and sharp, and they cannot be far off now. Now then, forward again!'

They went on at a walk, and half a mile further on, as they rounded a bend in the river, they came upon the enemy halted, and refreshing themselves after their retreat; some had even stacked their arms on the bank, and were mixing their meal of parched pea-flour and water; others were smoking and chatting, and none expected an attack from this new quarter, as the only portion of them under arms was a detachment told off to guard their rear. Several of their wounded were groaning in rude litters, made of country beds slung to poles, whilst their comrades gave water to those who needed it. Jokes were being bandied to and fro, or execrations at the superior force which had driven them back; but soon were these changed to yells of hatred and despair, as the trumpet rang out the charge, and with flashing sabres, and shouts of 'Allah ho Akbar!' the irregulars, led by the two Europeans, swooped down upon them.

Taken at a disadvantage as they were, those who still retained their arms were nearly ten times the number of their assailants, and some show of resistance was made, which would have been formidable if better combined; but the horsemen were amongst them, sabring right and left, and those who had arms soon followed the example of those who had been caught bathing and eating, and fled towards the jungle. One determined band, led by a gigantic Boondela, made a stand on a rocky knoll, from whence they commenced a vigorous fire, deeming their position secure from cavalry; but they little knew of the daring of the reckless rider who had chased many a hog and blue bull over worse ground, and to their surprise the horsemen came at them, plunging over the rocks.

Levelling his matchlock, the leader fired at Fordham as he came on, but the ball glanced under his arm, and mortally wounded a young trooper who was just behind. Clubbing his gun the Boondela smote through the guard of another, and sent him reeling over his horse's tail; but the sowar bounded to his feet, and rushed at his foe, who, hurling his empty weapon at him, drew his heavy tulwar, and flung his shield over his arm. The Pathan was a good swordsman, but he was soon hard pressed by his gigantic foe, who would have triumphed had not Fordham, who had just caught a blow which would have ended Milford's earthly career, and returned it with interest by his sword's point, turned to the assistance of his follower. The rebel chief turned savagely on his nobler assailant, and in doing so exposed himself to the Pathan, who with one of those drawing cuts in which the Indian swordsman excels, cleft his antagonist almost in two. This decided the day, and no further resistance was made.

The ground was strewn with arms of all kinds, including the ginjals and zumboorkas which had formed the battery at the ambuscade, and which were, it was reasonably supposed, the chief defence of the stockade on the neighbouring hill. Three of Fordham's men had fallen, and two more were wounded. One of the slain, the boy who had received the shot intended for his leader, was the nephew of an aged trooper who had fiercely avenged his fall. Fordham, ever tender towards his men in trouble, sent for the old man, and told him to take the body back to the camp, and that he would undertake all the expenses of his funeral. 'For the ball that laid him low was intended for me; I ought to have had it,' he said.

'Nay, khodawund,' replied the old man, as the tears

started to his eyes, 'may every bullet find a place in this poor body ere it touches you! It was his fate. The horse that he rode—Allah grant that vultures pick its bones ere long!—has the mark of the devil on its neck; you English sahibs do not believe in it, but it is true. I warned that poor boy's father not to buy the brute; but it is a fine animal, and he could not afford much money. He bought it, and he fell in the first action; then this poor boy would have it, and now he has gone. Soobhan Allah! it is fate!'

The horse in question had a little curl of hair on his chest, which was quite enough to condemn him in the eyes of the natives as a beast of ill-omen. Such an animal, be he perfect in form and temper, will find no favour with the superstitious Oriental, who would rather trust himself to any spavined, cross-grained, broken-winded brute, than to the noblest steed cursed with the fatal mark.

As there was a good deal of spoil in the way of arms which it was necessary to collect, more for the sake of preventing their being regained by the rebels than for their value, Fordham decided on leaving Milford and the troop, whilst, with a few men, he pushed on to Smith's camp.

After a few hours he returned with an officer and escort from the detachment, to whom he delivered over the arms and prisoners—glad to wash his hands of the latter—and, making his men fall in, they resumed their homeward march.

'You had a narrow escape from that Boondela, Fordham,' remarked his young companion.

'Yes,' replied he, with a somewhat sad expression, which the other afterwards remembered; 'a miss is as

good as a mile. Perhaps the next time I may not be so lucky.'

They reached camp late in the evening, and Fordham got orders from the general to join at once, which they did next day.

Eighteen hours after this, in the early morning, long before even the crows' dawn, the shrill fifes of a Madras native infantry regiment playing 'Cheer, boys, cheer,' as they marched with a swinging step past Milford's tent, awoke him.

Already the tent pitchers were at work, knocking up the tent pegs, and the camp was astir. The young man sprang up and dressed with a rapidity that is only acquired in time of war. His attire was of a semi-military nature—a tunic of red cloth wadded with cotton-wool, usually called by its native name a 'mirzaie,' a grey felt helmet, with a silk turban round it, and long cavalry boots. Hastily belting on his sword and revolver, and slinging his cartridge-belt over his shoulder, he sallied forth in search of Fordham, who was already out with his men. After giving a few instructions to his native officers, Fordham turned to his comrade, saying:

'Come along, Ernest, and get something to eat before we start. The general is routing us out betimes, and report has it we have some chance of a brush with the enemy, who is in force beyond the river.'

Chand Khan, who was faithfully following his master's fortunes, had prepared a camp-table beside a crackling bonfire, which the chilliness of the season had rendered acceptable, and a steaming jug of chocolate and rounds of buttered *chuppattees* awaited them.

The whole camp lay at their feet, for they were pitched on the crest of a knoll. All the dark plain below, on either side of the main road, was lit by a thousand

fires, which kept flashing up with fitful gleams as the spare litter was anon tossed on to make a blaze. The stillness of night was broken by all the discordant sounds of a moving camp: the incessant clatter of tent-pegs, the shouting of men, neighing of horses, gurgling of camels, creaking of heavily laden cart-wheels, shrilling of fifes and rolling of drums—all of which made a scene not easily described. Then rang out a clear bugle call, answered by a blare of trumpets, as regiment after regiment of cavalry and artillery took it up. The air for a few minutes was full of soul-stirring martial music, sweet to the soldier, though not perhaps of strict accord to the sensitive ear of the musician; but that glorious jangling clang of trumpets sent young Ernest Milford's blood tingling to his finger-tips, and was remembered for many a long day. Then dark sinuous masses might be perceived moving over the plain, and the road seemed thronged both to sound and sight. An old hut catches fire and throws a transient gleam around. There go the red-coated infantry, and there the quivering pennons of the Lancers, followed by the French grey and beehive helmets of the Madras light cavalry. In the distance looms over the horse artillery, huge elephants, like those that swelled the armies of Tamerlane, dragging in harness the ponderous siege guns. Beyond the orderly masses of troops surge a confused throng of camp followers, whose presence was often a source of serious embarrassment.

The grey dawn was just streaking the eastern horizon, when Fordham was summoned to the general's tent—or rather camp-table, the rest having been struck and started. He found the veteran soldier carefully scanning a map, which, weighted by a couple of bricks and a lantern, covered the table. The chief of his staff, with compasses

and tablets, was making hurried memoranda, whilst the rest of the officers stood around.

'Major Fordham,' said the general, turning to him on his arrival, 'I am about to make use of you on a most important service, which I have reason to believe you are well fitted to perform, especially after what I have heard of your late exploit on the Cheetul River.'

Fordham bowed as the old soldier looked at him with a kindly smile.

'You will please to look at this map,' he continued; 'here, within this red pencil line, is the enemy's force, which we shall attack in a few hours. This is all arranged and will be, I trust, satisfactorily carried out; but there is a point which is of importance to us, both as preventing the escape of the enemy after defeat, and the possibility of his reinforcements taking us on our flank. These heights, you will observe, run in the form of an irregular crescent, the western horn of which is opposite to a spur from another chain of hills; the plain is thus narrowed to a space of about half a mile, through which runs a road leading to the old fort of Bodagurh. You see the Cheetul River sweeps round from the south-west and west, and takes a northerly and easterly direction; through this gorge the banks are steep and the current swift, and here the enemy have managed to construct a bridge of boats. This bridge I must have destroyed, and you are the man to do it, I think.' (Fordham bowed again.) 'You are a shikaree as well as a soldier, and I trust you will be able to get your men across country to this point in less time than any of the regular cavalry could get there, and long before infantry could. Guns are out of the question, for in places you will have little else than cattle tracks. Here is a tracing of the map. Start without delay, and destroy that bridge if you can before noon.'

'It shall be done, general, if man can do it,' replied Fordham, saluting as he turned away.

'*Au revoir*,' said the general, holding out his hand.

'Good-bye,' returned the other, grasping it cordially; for the veteran was an old friend, and a wave of sadness came over Fordham as he thought that the parting might be their last; but by the time he reached his men the transient feeling was over, and cheerily rang out his voice as he gave the order to mount. It so happened that Fordham's guide was an old shikaree, born and bred in that part of the country, to whom every turn of the river and curve of the hills were familiar, and under his direction they soon left the busy camp and struck into the silent jungle. As the crow flies the distance to the bridge of boats was not more than eighteen miles, but the only practicable way was tortuous in the extreme. Where the ground was level no time was lost, and they pressed forward at a trot; but in one place they had to dismount and lead their horses over the rocky bed of a mountain stream, startling the jungle fowl out of the bamboo copses, and astonishing the grey monkeys, who for the first time in their lives saw a squadron of cavalry led over their native wilds.

The morning broke fresh and sparkling, with all the crispness and exhilaration of the season of the year—the Indian cold weather. Overhead a bright Italian sky; all around the dewdrops glittering in the slanting rays of the rising sun; every bush gay with blossom and ringing with joyous songsters; all seeming glad and peaceful, and little in harmony with the clank of arms, and the clash of the charger's hoof on the rock, which told of war and death.

Long did Milford remember that eventful morning, and that wild scramble over the hills.

'I almost wish,' said Fordham to his comrade, as a

sambur hind dashed across their path, 'that we were only on one of our pleasant shooting trips, Ernest, instead of this more serious matter. I know we shall succeed, something tells me that, but at what sacrifice no one knows. I would, my boy, you were safe home again at Ferndale Lodge.'

'Never mind me, Fordham,' replied the other; 'we will both go back home covered with glory, and then you must pitch your camp at Ferndale for a time—and won't you just be welcome!'

'I should like it, Ernest, my boy. Nothing would please me better than to see you in your own English home, but I doubt whether I shall ever see old England again.'

'Of course you will; surely you don't intend to stick in this country all your life. No, you've promised me you will take your furlough after these rebels have all been knocked on the head, and my mother has already assigned you a bedroom.'

'*L'homme propose, mais Dieu dispose*,' replied the other, reverently lifting his helmet for a moment. 'We shall see what time will bring forth. Look! yonder is the river and the bridge of boats. Save for a few boatmen cooking on the bank, they seem to have left it unguarded, in which case our task will be easy.'

They were then defiling slowly over the crest of a low ridge which commanded a view of the valley and river, and they had been for some time following a cart track, leading to the ferry which had existed before the construction of the bridge. As they descended the ridge the road led through a low jungle of palas trees, which for a time obstructed their view.

'I think I hear a band,' remarked Martin, the adjutant, riding up to Fordham; 'don't you?'

'It sounds like it. Yes, there is no mistake, it is a band,

and playing an English air too. We cannot have been forestalled surely? Ride forward to the advanced guard, Martin, and fall back at once if there be anything suspicious.'

The strains of the band came clearer, and the air was unmistakably 'The girl I left behind me.'

The advanced guard halted, and Fordham rode forward.

'A battalion of native infantry is crossing the bridge, sir,' reported the adjutant, 'and it is difficult to say whether they are friends or foes: they march as steadily as any Queen's corps, and the band plays an English tune.'

Fordham was eagerly scanning them through his glass.

'Rebels, every mother's son of them,' he sternly muttered, shutting up the telescope. 'The officers are all black, but the villains still keep up their discipline. Now, gentlemen, we must make small work of those brutes. Whatever I may have felt regarding the misguided creatures who have followed their own chiefs, I have not the slightest compunction towards those fiends who, pampered and spoilt by us, have turned on the hands that gave them their salt; so forward and strike home! Let the villains come off that bridge, and then charge and spare not!'

The rebel infantry had crossed the bridge before the advance of their assailants was noticed; when, steadily as though they had been on parade, they threw themselves into square and prepared to resist cavalry.

It was the work of a few minutes to give the necessary instructions; one troop remaining in reserve, whilst the other, led by their commandant, trotted to the front.

Nothing could have seemed steadier than the attitude

of the mutineers. Milford rode by his friend's side, and Fordham, putting out his hand, gave his young comrade a firm grip.

'Ernest, my dear fellow, if I fall and you escape, let this be your last fight. You have done enough for your country, and need not fear for your good name. Now God bless you, my boy!'

He leant over Cossack's neck to hide his emotion, and patted the favourite on the shoulder, and then drawing his sword looked sternly ahead.

'Ready, present, fire!' came the word of command as given in those days, steadily from the square; but the crash of the volley was almost drowned in the pealing shout that broke from the troopers as Fordham, simultaneously with the word 'Ready,' shouted 'Charge!' and the trumpet rang out the order.

Irresistible was the avalanche. The work of the infantry had been done like the lesson of the parrot. The native officers had given the correct orders at proper times, and the manœuvre so often done on the parade-ground, and even on the battle-field, under their former leaders, was done again and faultlessly; but there the thing ended. It was the uniform of the warrior stuffed with straw—there was no heart in it; no faith in their leaders—none in themselves. At the first contact they broke; the square was in confusion—a chaotic mass of men striving to get out of the way of the avenging sabres of their foemen.

How they broke the square and got into it Milford could hardly say. The noise and smoke and flashing of fire, clicking of steel on steel, groans, shrieks, and yells, formed a sort of Pandemonium, through which he went as through a dream. He had an idea that a Sepoy placed the muzzle of his musket close to his back, and was about to pull trigger, when Fordham's sword crashed through

the rebel's brain, and the next moment he reeled and felt deadly sick, as he saw his beloved companion throw his arms up in the air, and Cossack rear up wildly and fall over with him backwards. He was springing to his assistance, when there came a terrific crash on his head, and all was dark. A Sepoy had clubbed his musket and struck him down with the heavy butt.

How long he lay in a swoon he knew not, but when he came to himself he was lying under the shade of an old mango tree with wet cloths on his head, being fanned by one of the troopers. A short distance from him was a group of sorrowing men round a native bed, whereon was stretched the man who for the past two years had been to him the dearest of friends. With a wild cry of anguish he staggered to the place and sank down beside him. There was no need to ask the grave medical man, who bent over his leader, giving him now and then some slight stimulant. All hope was over, and victory had indeed been dearly bought. Once Fordham opened his eyes for a second, and half opening his hand closed his fingers on Milford's. Thus they remained for some time, the young man unable to control his sobs. In the distance a few shots were still being fired, but the action was virtually at an end. The second charge of the reserve troop had completed the discomfiture of the rebels, and the plain was strewn with their dead and dying. After some time a new-comer was added to the ring of mourners. It was Martin. His anxious enquiry of the doctor was met with a sorrowful shake of the head; but Fordham heard the whisper and opened once more his eyes. More from his look than from any action, Martin drew near and bent down. His leader's lips parted, and then came the query, faintly and yet earnestly:

'The bridge?'

'Is destroyed, totally destroyed,' was the reply.

A bright smile came over the dying commander's face, as he knew that the work entrusted to him had been completed; his hand tightened over that of his young comrade, and with a gentle quivering sigh he died a gallant soldier's death.

One year more has passed, and a travelling carriage dashes up the old avenue at Ferndale Hall. A stalwart young man, bronzed by Eastern suns, hands out a fair, bright, happy English girl, whom he now calls 'wife.' Hand in hand they roam over their new home. In the hall he points out to her a noble stag's head, an Indian sambur. Underneath it on brackets are two well-worn rifles. The rifles were Fordham's, the head that of a sambur he killed. They go out into the garden, and across the park into the churchyard. Drawing a key from his pocket, the young husband opens a side door of the church, and the two stand under the varied light of a beautiful painted window; underneath is a brass plate:

Sacred to the Memory of

PHILLIP FORDHAM,

A MAJOR IN HER MAJESTY'S INDIAN ARMY;

KILLED IN ACTION WHILST LEADING HIS MEN,

FEBRUARY 4TH, 1858,

AGED 45 YEARS.

THIS WINDOW WAS ERECTED BY A SORROWING FRIEND, TO WHOM

AS

A CHRISTIAN, A SOLDIER, AND A SCHOLAR

HE WAS EVER A PATTERN.

APPENDIX.

TOPOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE SEONEE DISTRICT.

WHILST this volume has been going through the press, a notice has appeared in several public journals, which might lead the reader to expect a work more exclusively devoted to topography and natural science, and perhaps the perusal of the foregoing narrative of a hunter's life may have created a desire to know something more of the district in which I have placed my characters. I therefore append this memorandum, necessarily very brief, of the topography and history of Seonee, a district which, in common with others in the Central Provinces, has, within a few years, emerged with rapid strides from barbaric wilds to comparative civilisation. We do not grow cities in India quite so rapidly as our American cousins do on the other side of the Atlantic. Still, on turning over the pages of the new 'Gazetteer of the Central Provinces,' we find descriptions almost as glowing as those of our old friend Zephaniah Scadder, and we read of churches and dispensaries, market-halls and public gardens, in places where I remember but a few thatched bungalows, and where the leopards stole our goats, and wandering bears dug up our flower-beds by night.

It was reserved for the present governor of Bombay, Sir Richard Temple, to develop the rich resources of the country which had lain dormant since the days of the Mahrattas. He rode in over joint-dislocating ruts and boulders, and black tenacious mud that loosened one's horse's shoes, scrambling up gradients like the roof of a house, and fording treacherous streams, where hidden quagmires were doubtfully consolidated

by faggots and rough-hewn logs, and when he left the Provinces, he might have done so in a triumphal car, drawn by a traction-engine, over broad, smooth causeways and noble bridges.

During the years of his rule as Chief Commissioner every scheme of public utility was met by restless, untiring energy; it was not enough that a work was sanctioned and expected to be carried out, it was to be seen, personally inspected, no matter what the distance; and the Chief's rides are things to be remembered somewhat ruefully by tender horsemen.

I have experienced some difficulty in preparing the following synopsis, removed as I am from the scenes I describe, and being debarred from obtaining and utilising local traditions, of which there are many, and there is not much on record to which I can obtain access in England. I have had to assist myself occasionally from the Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the district (1867) by Captain (now Colonel) W. Brooke Thomson, with whom I was associated in the work for some years. His habits of observation and his long experience, extending over ten years, of this district render his remarks, which I acknowledge as I proceed, of particular value.

The district of Seonee, comprising a tract of about 4,000 square miles, forms a section of the Satpura range lying between the valley of the Nerbudda on the north, and the Nagpoor territory on the south, extending from about 21° 39′ to 22° 53′ N. lat., and from 79° 15′ to 80° 15′ E. long. It is bounded as follows: Jubbulpoor and Mandla N., Nursingpoor N.W., Chindwarra W., Nagpoor S.W., Bhundara S., Balaghat and Mandla E. The plateau lies like a huge embankment between the valley of the Nerbudda and the Mahratta country of Nagpoor. The traveller mounts the northern face at the Silwa Pass about twenty-seven miles from Jubbulpoor, and, traversing an undulating table-land for about seventy-five miles, descends a yet deeper fall at the Koraie Ghât, twenty-one miles south of the town of Seonee. To his left hand, eastwards as he travels south, the uplands sink and fall into the valleys of the Thanwur and Bān Gunga, whilst on his right they lie level with the plateaux of Chindwarra. Of the 4,000 square miles of which Seonee is composed, about three-fourths are upland, and the remainder lie in the valley of

the Bān Gunga and the talooqa of Dongertāl, a portion of which last has lately been cut off and added to Nagpoor. But nowhere is the elevation above the sea less than 1,000 feet, whilst on the plateau the highest point is 2,749. The station of Seonee itself is 2,043, which we may accept as a general average.

The upland over which the road, which was once the high-way from Calcutta to Bombay, passes is divided into two portions by the Bān Gunga, which, rising at the village of Pertapoor, a few miles south of the station of Seonee, flows, as described in p. 146 of this volume, first to the north-west, then eastward, till it receives the waters of the Thanwur, when it turns due south; thus in its easterly course bisecting the plateau into north-western and south-eastern divisions. This bisection also divides the district geologically, the upper division being exclusively trap overlying sandstone, the lower more varied, being mixed with granite and metamorphic rocks.

In the north 'the trap formation is seen in every variety; no one walking over the country will forget the dreadful trap boulders, and the basaltic cappings of the cliff-like walls of all the northern streams are very remarkable. Quartz, feldspar, and magnesia mica also are met with. These rocks indeed constitute the prevailing formation of the whole country running from the banks of the Gunga just before that river turns south, along the watershed of the Saugor and Hirree rivers, slanting right across the summit plateau to the Pench. South and east of this line you find quite a different formation. It is still, I believe, basaltic, but reposing on syenitic granite, with here and there beds and veins of feldspar, hornblende, and quartz, and other metamorphic rocks. You see the hornblende and the quartz on all the hills, and the granite is also found cropping up constantly in the passes to the lower country. And where the Gunga and the Hirree force their way from the upland to the lower country, you find the rocks all granite.'[1]

In the beds of the Gunga and Bawun-thurree it also occurs in places, especially in the barriers of the Gunga.

Limestone occurs in one place, to the best of my recollec-

[1] Col. Thomson's Report.

tion not far from Dongertāl. The lapidary would find a rich store in the north, of heliotrope, carnelian, moss and fortification agates, all of which are common to the valley of the Nerbudda; also geodes containing fine crystals of amethystine quartz.

In the north-western section the rivers are characterized by rugged and often precipitous banks of rocks, with clear water dashing over boulder and shingle, or gliding calmly in deep reaches terminated by rocky barriers. The south-eastern streams, on the other hand, partake of the common Indian character of deep sandy beds, into which the water sinks out of sight during the summer, percolating through the soft sand till some outcrop of rock here and there arrests its course and forces it to the surface, forming an occasional pool. When the traveller or peasant would slake his thirst, he digs a hole a couple of feet in depth in the apparently dry bed of the stream, and has not long to wait for the fruits of his labour.

The district is not very rich in minerals. Mica exists, but not in valuable quantities. In the south-eastern section large beds of laterite occur, in which is found, and worked after a rude fashion, hæmatitic iron ore. Gold is found in the south-western corner of the Dongertāl talooqa, in the affluents of the Puchdhar river. It is washed out of the sand towards the close of the rainy season, by a class of people called 'Sonjhirs,' who are generally in bond, by means of advances, to native bankers, to whom they make over their earnings; but they have a curious objection to getting more than a certain quantity at a time. It was with difficulty I got some of them to work for me in 1863, bringing me the gold mixed with the sand, and it was still more difficult for me to get a sufficient quantity of gold out of which to make a cross about an inch in length.

More than half of the district is wild forest and rugged rock: deducting the total cultivated and culturable area, as reported in 1867, viz. 613,760 + 441,111 = 1,054,871 acres from the 2,518,908 acres of total area given in the map issued from the Surveyor-General's Office, the result shows an area of 1,464,037 acres of wilderness. Much of this area is dense forest, which sweeps round the eastern face of the plateau, and turning south, runs westerly to the Pench River, and then down to the south-western corner. This is the great belt which

includes the bison jungles of Sonawanee, and which varies in width from a minimum of five miles to a maximum of twenty-five, the average being about ten or twelve.

In the north-western section forests prevail generally, but they are denser towards 'the junction of the Thele and Gunga, and again on the hills dividing the Bijna from the Gunga; also along the hills to the north of the Bijna'—indeed, the whole of the north is covered with forest, in the midst of which a scanty cultivation exists.

With regard to the general aspect of the district, I cannot improve on Colonel Thomson's graphic report, which says:—'In the north-western, or, as we may call it, the sandstone and trap section, the bare, bleak, treeless appearance of the cultivated lands and the stunted and scanty appearance of the forest are remarkable, and in the northernmost portion the want of population is very striking, the inhabitants being chiefly Gonds of the wilder, poorer sort, and grazing Aheers. The village sites would seem, so to speak, to correspond with the country. They are very miserable, squalid, comfortless-looking collections of mere huts, in a double line, stuck generally on a bare ridge. In the south-eastern section everything is different. Instead of the bleak, brown-looking country of the north, you have a light, bright-looking country, almost all of it divided off into irrigation compartments; and with an almost park-like appearance, owing to the numerous Mohwa, Tendoo, and Chironjee trees, which you find in plantations on the higher lands, and dotted here and there even amongst the rice-fields. There is everywhere evidence of a thick population. You meet carts driving, as well as laden, in great numbers on all the innumerable tracks that cover the face of the country, which give an aspect of life and business strongly contrasting with that of the north. The village sites, corresponding to the general appearance, are frequently situated on a rising ground, embosomed in trees, with one or more fine tanks about them; and the houses are large and well built, and properly raised, and carefully fenced in with tall bamboo fences, having a small garden plot, with a well behind or inside the fence. The Malgoozar's house is built on the same plan, the buildings forming a quadrangle round a courtyard, the Malgoozar's own residence being in the inner

side of the square, with the garden plot behind, the rest of the buildings on the sides right and left being cattle-sheds and granaries. Generally there are two rooms, one on either side of the front entrance, where strangers and visitors are lodged. Inside you see the Malgoozar's Khansars, with fine, sleek, high-caste-looking bullocks fastened to the posts near the kind of arbour or porch in front of his door. Altogether there is an air of comfort and plenty, combined with care and system, which indicates a thrifty, thriving people, very much higher in the scale of civilization than in the north.

'The scenery in many parts of the district is very remarkable. Nothing can exceed the beauty of certain portions of the Nerbudda River, where it flows in long, deep, cool-looking, often winding reaches, between high banks, covered near the water's edge with short grass, and crowned with magnificent old trees of all descriptions, which overhang the water, under which you see herds of spotted deer and flocks of pea-fowl feeding. The scenery of the Upper Gunga, too, is very charming, like the Westmoreland rivers.

'There is also some truly grand scenery where the Gunga and the Thanwur, flowing at right angles to each other, commence their fall into the lower country, passing over alternations of rapids and pools, between precipices of granite upwards of 200 feet high, and at last meet in a beautiful deep reach in the heart of the great forest called Bansabhar.

'The Hirrie in like manner passes with a more gradual fall, but for a longer distance, and through almost higher and more solid-looking rocks, which are crowned on the one side by the ruins of an old fort called Amodagurh, on the other by those of the palace of the famous Rajpoot queen, Sona Ranee.

'Few have seen this place, as it is situated in the heart of a dense, tiger-infested forest, and only accessible on foot, and then with difficulty. The Bygas have rope ladders from the top of the precipice, to enable them to get at the honeycombs found in clefts of the rocks.'

The scenery of such a country as is above described by Colonel Thomson must of necessity be varied, and I can add my testimony, as a sketcher from nature, to its being in parts 'really magnificent;' the views from the Silwa and Koraie

passes, from the old hill-forts of Kohurgurh, Pertabgurh, and Bhainsagurh, and from the Nagarkhana Peak near the station of Seonee, are grand; whilst the Dullal Valley, the reaches of the Gunga and Hirree, and many a dingly dell in the southern division, present lovely bits for the painter. The whole district is full of beauty, and it is a matter for regret that the traveller passing along the main road loses much that is pleasing, and sees some of the most uninteresting features.

The climate on the plateau of Seonee is equable, and much less oppressive in the hot weather than in the plains of India. The nights are generally cool, and during the rains thick clothing is required, and fires are often agreeable. The cold weather is pleasant and bracing, though not so sharp as in the north-west and the Punjab.

The forest lands are feverish from August till November, and during those months it is not advisable to remain out under canvas; otherwise we found tent life very pleasant throughout the remaining nine months of the year.

The necessary brevity of this appendix will not allow of a full treatment of the Flora and Fauna; it would require another volume to do full justice to the subject. I can only mention the most important timber trees and such plants as are most striking, and add short notices of the mammals and most interesting birds.

I have already alluded in the preceding narrative to the beauty of the forests at various seasons of the year, and to the richness of the flowering trees, the Buteas, the Bauhinias, and others; but I think I omitted to notice a very beautiful one, the Amultas (*Cassia fistula*), which bears some resemblance to a gigantic laburnum. The southern forests produce finer trees than the northern, and this is especially apparent in the growth of the teak. This varies considerably with the geological formation; and the natives classify the varieties as *Pathuria Sagoon*, or stony teak, and *Doodhiya Sagoon*, or milky teak. The former is found on the sterile trap formation of the north-western section, and is close-grained, short, and knotty; the latter on the metamorphic soils of the south-east, and is of a finer quality and of more important dimensions.

Class	Native Name	Scientific Name	Remarks
Diandria Monog.	Hursinga	Nyctanthes Arbor tristis	Flowers white, with orange tube, exquisitely fragrant.
Tetrandria Monog.	Ghundul	Ixora parviflora	Wood used for torches; burns brightly.
	Munjeet	Rubia munjista	A most valuable red dye; stems and roots used.
Pentandria Monog.	Bēr	Zizyphus jujuba	Small tree; wood fine-grained, strong, and hard.
	Ghato	Zizyphus Xylopyrus	Fruit used for dyeing leather; wood for tools.
	Sagoon	Tectona grandis	The well-known timber tree, teak.
	Aām	Mangifera indica	The mango; fruit delicious; wood useful if kept dry. Much used.
	Toon	Cedrela Toona	A valuable reddish wood, of large size.
	Hurdoo	Nauclea cordifolia	Large timber, light, and easily worked.
	Kuddum	Nauclea parvifolia	Wood reddish, close-grained, used for gun-stocks.
	Koochla	Strychnos Nux vomica	Nut used for poisoning fish, and medicinally.
	Nirmul	Strychnos potatorum	The nut is used for clarifying water.
Pentandria Digynia	Bhelawun	Semecarpus Anacardium	The black juice of the nut used for marking cloth.
Pentandria Trigynia	Jhow	Tamarix indica	Tamarisk; grows in river-beds.
Hexandria Monog.	Bāns	Bambusa stricta	Hill-bamboo, used for spear shafts.
	Peka Bāns	Bambusa arundinacea	Common bamboo.
Octandria Monog.	Dhub	Grislea tomentosa	A beautiful flowering shrub, petals crimson.
	Kosum	Schleichera trijuga	A hard wood. On this tree the lac insect deposits.
	Kerounda	Carissa Carandas	White starry blossoms; fruit good when cultivated.
Octandria Tetrag.	Goonja	Odina Woodier	Handsome, close, red wood, but difficult to season.
Decandria Monog.	Kouha	Pentaptera Arjuna	A heavy valuable timber of large size.
	Saj	Pentaptera tomentosa	A valuable timber, white ant-proof.
	Dhaoura	Conocarpus latifolia	Wood valuable, tough and strong.
	Rohnee	Swietenia febrifuga	Handsome useful wood, with febrifugal bark.
		Swietenia Chloroxylon	Satinwood, a most valuable and prized wood.
	Hurra	Terminalia Chebula	Yellowish wood, but subject to dry rot.

Class	Native Name	Scientific Name	Remarks
Decandria Monog.	Buhera	Terminalia Bellerica	Fine large tree, but timber of not much value.
	Achar	Buchanania latifolia	Wood useful, and the seeds are dried and eaten.
	Salaie	Boswellia thurifera	Wood worthless; yields the gum olibanum.
	Kuth bēl	Feronia elephantum	Light-coloured hard wood; fruit and leaves aromatic.
	Amultas	Cathartocarpus (Cassia) fistula	Yields the cassia pulp of commerce; very lovely yellow flowers.
	Kuchnar	Bauhinia variegata	Very beautiful flowers; the pods are eaten as a vegetable.
	Mahoul	Bauhinia scandens	A gigantic creeper, with tough woody stems.
	Neem	Azedarachta (Melia) indica	Wood hard and mottled; the whole tree bitter and medicinal.
	Bukain	Melia sempervirens	An ornamental tree similar to the above.
	Anjun	Hardwickia binata	Wood dark red, hard and strong; bark fibrous.
Icosandria Monog.	Lendiya	Lagerstrœmia parviflora	Wood tough, and valued for its qualities in standing water; one of the trees on which the tussur silk-moth feeds.
	Jamoon	Eugenia Jambolana	Wood brittle, leaf aromatic.
Polyandria Monog.	Dhamun	Grewia tiliæfolia	A very valuable wood, like lancewood.
	Babool	Mimosa (Acacia) arabica	Crooked timber, but in great demand on account of its toughness; yields good gum; cattle eat pods.
	Kheir	Acacia Catechu	Wood valuable; catechu is extracted from it.
	Siris	Acacia speciosa	Wood used for pestles, mortars, ploughshares, &c.
	Gurraree	Acacia procera	A large tree, with bluish-grey foliage.
	Koombha	Careya arborea	Good serviceable wood, of tough quality.
	Ran Siris	Acacia odoratissima	Heart-wood dark-coloured, takes fine polish.
	Kenkra	Acacia leucophlœa	Wood strong, but small; bark fibrous.
	Tendoo	Diospyros Melanoxylon	The heart-wood of this is ebony; fruit edible.
	Mohwa	Bassia latifolia	Wood worthless, but flowers eaten raw and dried, and oil expressed from seeds.

Class	Native Name	Scientific Name	Remarks
Polyandria Monog.	Bael . . .	Ægle Marmelos	A celebrated medicinal fruit; highly aromatic; wood very hard and durable.
Polyandria Polyg.	Karee . .	Uvaria tomentosa	A strong yellow wood.
Didynamia Angiosp.	Tetoo . .	Bignonia indica	Noticeable for its huge seed-pods; bark used in dyeing and tanning.
	Seevun . .	Gmelina arborea	Wood used for carriage panels.
Monodelph. Dodecand.	Oolie . .	Sterculia urens .	Wood worthless; bark white and smooth.
Monodelph. Polyand.	Semul . .	Bombax heptaphyllum	Cotton tree; wood soft, used for canoes.
	Gubdi . .	Cochleospermum Gossypium	Wood soft, smoulders; yields a gum like tragacanth.
Diadelphia Triand.	Imlee . .	Tamarindus indica	The tamarind fruit tree; wood very hard.
Diadelphia Decand.	Beejasal .	Pterocarpus Marsupium	Valuable timber, and yields gum kino.
	Tinsa . .	Dalbergia oojeinensis	Wood very strong, used for cart axles.
	Sheeshum .	Dalbergia latifolia	Wood very dark, and much used for cabinet-work.
	Palas . .	Butea frondosa .	Flowers and gum valuable, and roots fibrous.
	Palaseen .	Butea superba .	A splendid creeper of immense size.
	Pangra . .	Erythrina indica	Flowers rich crimson; wood soft and white.
	Sola . . .	Æschynomene aspera	A marshy plant, from the pith of which hats are made.
Monœcia Monand.	Pakur . .	Ficus infectoria	Fruit small, ripening in rainy season.
	Goolur . .	Ficus glomerata	Fruit large and sweet-smelling, though insipid.
	Peepul . .	Ficus religiosa .	The sacred peepul; birds fond of the fruit.
	Bur . . .	Ficus indica .	The well-known banyan.
	Kanthul .	Artocarpus integrifolia	Wood hard; fruit gigantic —the jack-fruit of Europeans; seeds are eaten roasted.
Monœcia Monadelph.	Aonla . .	Phyllanthus Emblica	Wood hard, durable; fruit acid, astringent.
Dicœcia Hexand.	Khujoor .	Phœnix sylvestris	The date tree.

I have been obliged to restrict myself to the more useful and larger trees and shrubs. I would I had space for the ornamental plants, whose blossoms make glad and fragrant the hill-sides and verdant valleys, and gem the surface of the waters. I must, however, make some mention of a princely timber tree, the Saul, *Shorea* (*Vatica*) *robusta*, which, though not strictly a denizen of Seonee, is found in abundance in the Raigurh Bichia tract, which, adjoining the Seonee district, was made over at the time of settlement to us for survey and assessment. This noble tree yields timbers from 30 to 60 feet in length, with a girth of 3 to 4½ feet. The wood is hard, heavy, and at the same time elastic. It is in great repute for house and ship-building, but it is stated to shrink and warp much when cut into planks. The tree yields in great abundance a kind of resin used as a substitute for pitch, and the Mundla Gonds used formerly to destroy many fine trees by girdling them for the sake of the *dhoona*, as this substance is called. Fortunately, now the Forest Department have taken the Saul under their special care; so this indiscriminate destruction has been arrested.

Of the edible roots consumed by the Gonds the principal ones are the *kookanda* (*Costus speciosus*), wild yams (*Dioscorea anguina* and *D. pentaphylla*), a species of arrowroot (*Curcuma angustifolia*) called *Tikoor*.

Of the Fauna of the district the mammalia comprise the following :—

Order	Generic and Specific Name	English Name	Native Name
Primates	Inuus rhesus	The Bengal Monkey	Bundar
	Presbitis Entellus	Black-faced Monkey	Lungoor
Cheiroptera	Pteropus Edwardsii	Flying Fox	Wurbagool
	Megaderma Lyra	Large-eared Vampire	Chumgadoor
	Murina formosa	Beautiful Bat	Brahmuni Chumgadoor
Insectivora	Sorex cærulescens	Musk Rat	Chhoochhoondur
Carnivora	Ursus labiatus	Black Bear	Bhaloo
	Arctonyx collaris (?)	Hog Badger	Bhalu-soor
	Lutra Nair	Common Otter	Ood Billão
	Felis Tigris	Tiger	Sher or Bāgl
	Felis Pardus	The Pard	Tendua
	Felis Chaus	Jungle Cat	Bun Bilão
	Felis Caracal	Lynx	Siahgosh

Order	Generic and Specific Name	English Name	Native Name
Carnivora	Felis rubiginosa	Rusty-spotted Cat	Jungli bilāo
	Felis jubata	Hunting Leopard	Cheetah
	Hyæna striata	Striped Hyæna	Turrus
	Paradoxurus Musanga	Toddy Cat	Katās
	Herpestes griseus	Madras Mungoose	Newul
	Canis pallipes	Wolf	Bheyria
	Canis aureus	Jackal	Geedur
	Cuon rutilans	Wild Dog	Sone Kootta
	Vulpes bengalensis	Fox	Lomri
Rodentia	Sciurus maximus	Central India Red Squirrel	Karrut
	Sciurus palmarum	Striped Squirrel	Gilhēree
	Pteromys Petaurista	Brown Flying Squirrel	Pakya
	Nesokia indica	Mole Rat	—— (?)
	Mus Bandicota	Bandicoot Rat	Ghoose
	Mus decumanus	Brown Rat	Chuha
	Mus brunneus	Tree Rat	Chuha
	Mus urbanus	Common Mouse	Choohi
	Hystrix leucura	Porcupine	Kanta Siah
	Lepus ruficaudatus	Common Indian Hare	Khurgosh
Pachydermata	Sus indica	Wild Boar	Burha
Ruminantia	Rucervus Duvaucellii	Swamp Deer	Bara Singha
	Rusa Aristotelis	Sambur	Sambur
	Axis maculatus	Spotted Deer	Cheetul
	Cervulus aureus	Rib-faced Deer	Kakur
	Memimna indica	Mouse Deer	Toor-i-māoo
	Portax pictus	Nylghau	Nylgão
	Tetraceros quadricornis	Four-horned Antelope	Chousinga
	Antilope bezoartica	Black Buck	Kala hiran
	Gazella Bennettii	Indian Gazelle	Chikara
	Gavæus Gaurus	The Bison (Gaur)	Boda
	Bubalus Arni	Buffalo	Urna

I have put in the hog-badger on hearsay evidence, not having met with it personally as in all the other cases. It was described to me by the Gonds, who called it bhalu-soor, the name given by Jerdon. I have not included the lion, as it is very doubtful whether it exists, though I frequently heard in the district of a tiger *without stripes* having been seen. Lions have been shot in the Central Provinces, but rarely. Jerdon says he never met with the *Felis rubiginosa* in the Central Provinces. The two little cats mentioned in p. 14 of this volume, which were reared by me, most certainly tallied with his description of the animal both in appearance and habits.

A wild elephant has wandered from the Mundla jungles to the borders of the district, but I did not think this justified my including it in the list; and for this reason I felt inclined to leave out the wild buffalo, of which only stray ones have been shot, its proper habitat being the plain country of Raipoor and Belaspoor.

A complete list of the birds would take up more space than I have at command, but I give a few of the most noticeable ones, selected from a catalogue of specimens I brought to England with me in 1861.

Order	English Name	Scientific Name	Native Name
Raptores	Great Brown Vulture	Vultur Monachus	Kala Gidh
	King Vulture	Otogyps calvus	Mulla Gidh
	Common Vulture	Gyps indicus	Burra Gidh
	Scavenger Vulture	Neophron percnopterus	Kul Murgh
	Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus	Bhyri
	Lugger Falcon	Falco Jugger	Jugger (m.), Lugger (f.)
	Red-headed Merlin	Hypotriorchis Chicquera	Tirmootee
	Crested Goshawk	Astur trivirgatus	Besra
	Shikra	Micronisus badius	Shikra
	Sparrow Hawk	Accipiter Nisus	Basha
	Tawny Eagle	Aquila fulvescens	Wokhāb
	Crestless Hawk-Eagle	Nisaetus Bonelli	Mohranga
	Crested Hawk-Eagle	Limnaetus cristatellus	Shah baz
	The Osprey	Pandion Haliætus	Machrera
	White-tailed Sea-Eagle	Polioætus Ichthyœtus	Madhuya
	White-eyed Buzzard	Poliornis Teesa	Teesa
	Common Kite	Milvus Govinda	Cheel
	Crested Honey Buzzard	Pernis cristata	Mudhowa
	Black-winged Kite	Elanus melanopterus	Kapasia
	Grass Owl	Strix candida	(?)
	Great Forest Owl	Huhua nepalensis	Burra ooloo
	Spotted Owlet	Athene Brama	Jungli Choogud
	Brown Hawk-Owl	Ninox scutellatus	Chogad besra
Insessores	Wire-tailed Swallow	Hirundo filifera	Leishra ababeel
	Dusky Crag Martin	Cotyle concolor	Mutiya ababeel
	Indian Night Jar	Caprimulgus asiaticus	Chipka
	Franklin's do.	Caprimulgus monticolus	Chipka
	Green Bee-eater	Merops viridis	Patringa
	Blue Roller	Coracias indica	Neel Kanth
	Brown-headed Kingfisher	Halcyon leucocephalus	Gurial
	Common Kingfisher	Alcedo bengalensis	Kilkila
	Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis	Korayala Kilkila
	Pied Hornbill	Hydrocissa coronata	Koochla Khaie
	Grey Hornbill	Meniceros bicornis	Dhunnese

Order	English Name	Scientific Name	Native Name
Insessores	Alexandrine Parrakeet	Palæornis Alexandri . .	Raie tota
	Rose-ringed Parrakeet	Palæornis torquatus . .	Teeah tota
	Rose-headed Parrakeet	Palæornis Rosa	Toonya sooga
	Woodpeckers . . .	(About seven species.)	
	Green Barbet . . .	Megalaima caniceps . .	Burra Bussunta
	Crimson-breasted Barbet	Xantholæma indica . .	Tambayra
	European Cuckoo .	Cuculus canorus . . .	Phoophoo
	Indian Cuckoo . .	Cuculus micropterus . .	Phoophoo
	Hawk Cuckoo . . .	Hierococcyx varius . .	Poppeea
	Black Cuckoo . . .	Eudynamys orientalis .	Koel
	Crow Pheasant . .	Centropus rufipennis . .	Mahoka
	Purple Honeysucker	Arachnechthra asiatica .	Shukkurkhora
	Hoopoe	Upupa Epops	Hood hood
	Shrikes	(About five species.)	
	Drongo Shrike . .	Dicrurus macrocercus .	Bhojunga
	Paradise Flycatcher	Tchitrea Paradisi . . .	Shah bulbul
	Red-whiskered Bulbul	Otocompsa jocosa . . .	Sepahi bulbul
	Common Bulbul . .	Pycnonotus pygæus . .	Kala bulbul
	Golden Oriole . . .	Oriolus Kundoo . . .	Peeluk
	Black-naped Oriole .	Oriolus indicus	Peeluk
	Black-capped Oriole	Oriolus melanocephalus .	Peeluk
	The Magpie Robin .	Copsychus saularis . .	Dehyul
	Black-faced Wagtail	Motacilla dukhunensis .	Dhobin
	Yellow Wagtail . .	Calobates sulphurea . .	Peela dhobin
	Common Crow . .	Corvus splendens . . .	Kouhwa
	Jungle Crow . . .	Corvus culminatus . . .	Doum Kouhwa
	Buff Magpie . . .	Dendrocitta rufa . . .	Maha Latora
	Pied Starling . . .	Sturnopastor contra . .	Ablak
	Rose-coloured Starling	Pastor roseus	Golabi Maina
	Weaver Bird . . .	Ploceus Baya	Baiya
	Red Waxbill . . .	Estrelda Amandava . .	Lal Mooniya
	Green Waxbill . .	Estrelda formosa . . .	Harre Mooniya
	Red-headed Bunting	Euspiza luteola	Gandam
	Crested Black Bunting	Melophus melanicterus .	Puthur chirta
	Black-bellied Finch-Lark	Pyrrhulauda grisea . .	Dhubbuk chiri
	Skylark	Alauda Gulgula	Bhurut
	Crested Lark . . .	Galerida cristata . . .	Chundool
Gemitores	*Green Pigeon . .	Crocopus phœnicopterus	Hurrial
	*Southern Green Pigeon	Crocopus chlorigaster .	Hurrial
	Green Imperial Pigeon	Carpophaga sylvatica . .	Sona Kabooter
	Rufous Turtle-Dove .	Turtur Meena	Kutla fākhtā
	Spotted Dove . . .	Turtur suratensis . . .	Chitla fākhtā
	Bronzed-winged Dove	Chalcophaps indicus . .	Ram ghooghoo

Order	English Name	Scientific Name	Native Name
Rasores	*Painted Sandgrouse	Pterocles fasciatus . . .	Ghikur
	*Common Peacock .	Pavo cristatus	Mohr
	*Red Jungle Fowl .	Gallus ferrugineus . . .	Bun moorgh
	*Grey Jungle Fowl .	Gallus Sonneratii . . .	Bun moorgh
	*Red Spur Fowl . .	Galloperdix spadiceus .	Chota Bun moorgh
	*Painted Partridge .	Francolinus pictus . .	Kala teetur
	†Grey Partridge . .	Ortygornis ponticeriana .	Gora teetur
	*Rock Bush Quail .	Perdicula asiatica . . .	Lowa
	*Large Grey Quail .	Coturnix communis . .	Buttair
	*Button Quail . . .	Turnix Sykesii	Chimnaj
Grallatores	*The Great Bustard .	Eupodotis Edwardsii . .	Tookdar
	*The Lesser Florikin	Sypheotides auritus . .	Churruz
	Courier Plover . .	Cursorius coromandelicus	Nukri
	Red-wattled Lapwing	Lobivanellus goensis . .	Titehree
	*Stone Plover . . .	Œdicnemus crepitans . .	Karwanak
	†Sarus Crane . . .	Grus Antigone	Sarhans
	*Common Crane . .	Grus cinerea	Kulung
	*Demoiselle Crane .	Anthropoides Virgo . .	Kurkurra
	*Common Snipe . .	Gallinago scolopacinus .	Cha-ha
	*Jack Snipe . . .	Gallinago Gallinula . .	Cha-ha
	*Curlew	Numenius arquata . . .	Goongh
	Stilt	Himantopus candidus .	Lal engri
	Bronze-winged Jacana	Metopidius indicus . .	Dulpipi
	†Pheasant-tailed Jacana	Hydrophasianus chirurgus	Dul Kukra
	*Purple Coot . . .	Porphyrio poliocephalus .	Kharim
	Bald Coot	Fulica atra	Dusri
	White-breasted Water Hen	Gallinula phœnicura . .	Kureyn
	Adjutant	Leptoptilos Argala. . .	Hurgila or Dheynk
	Marabou Adjutant .	Leptoptilos javanica . .	Chooniaree
	Black-necked Stork .	Mycteria australis . . .	Loha jung
	White Stork . . .	Ciconia alba	Lug lug
	*White-necked Stork	Ciconia leucocephala . .	Manikjor
	Purple Heron . . .	Ardea purpurea	Lal Kank
	Large Egret . . .	Herodias alba	Mala Konga (Gondee)
	Small Egret . . .	Herodias Garzetta . . .	Kirchia bagla
	Cattle Egret . . .	Buphus coromandus . .	Durrea bagla
	Pond Heron . . .	Ardeola leucoptera . .	Kani bagla
	Little Green Heron .	Butorides javanica . .	Kancha bagla
	*Bittern	Botaurus stellaris . . .	Buz
	Night Heron . . .	Nycticorax griseus. . .	Wank
	Pelican Ibis . . .	Tantalus leucocephalus .	Jhangil
	*Spoonbill	Platalea leucorodia . .	Chummuch buza
	Shell Ibis	Anastomus oscitans . .	Ghongil
	White Ibis	Threskiornis melanocephalus	Muroonwa
	*Black Ibis. . . .	Geronticus papillosus . .	Kurankool
	*Glossy Ibis . . .	Falcinellus igneus . . .	Kewaree
Natatores	*Grey Goose . . .	Anser cinereus	Junglee Hans
	*Black-backed Goose	Sarkidiornis melanonotus	Nukta

Order	English Name	Scientific Name	Native Name
Natatores	*Pigmy Goose Teal	Nettapus coromandelianus	Girree
	Whistling Teal	Dendrocygna Awsuree	Sillehee
	Ruddy Shieldrake	Casarca rutila	Surkhab (Chuckwa)
	Shoveller	Spatula clypeata	Tridaree
	*Pintail Duck	Dafila acuta	Dig hans
	*Widgeon	Mareca Penelope	——
	*Common Teal	Querquedula crecca	Toolsia bigree
	*Blue-winged Teal	Querquedula circia	——
	*Red-crested Pochard	Branta rufina	Lalsir, Gulnar
	*White-eyed Duck	Aythya nyroca	Lal bigree
	*Tufted Duck	Fuligula cristata	Dubaroo
	Little Grebe	Podiceps philippensis	Pundoobee
	Pelican	Pelecanus onocrotalus	Hawasil
	Grey Pelican	Pelecanus philippensis	Mutiya Hawasil
	Cormorant	Graculus Carbo	Jel Kouhwa
	Snake Bird	Plotus melanogaster	Bunwa

I have marked with an asterisk those birds which are good for the table, and with a dagger those which are eaten but which are inferior. Of the numerous families of bush and sedge warblers, fly-catchers, larks, finches, &c., I have been obliged to say little, only alluding to those birds which might strike the eye of the traveller or sportsman.

Seonee does not abound with reptiles. The snub-nosed alligator (*Crocodilus palustris*), the iguana (*Varanus Salvator*), the chameleon (*Chameleo vulgaris*), the common house-lizard (*Hemidactylus*), a few monitors, and a small seps are occasionally to be met with. Snakes are not numerous; the cobra (*Naja lutescens*) I have seldom found on the plateaux where the tic polonga (*Daboia elegans*) is more frequent. I have no doubt the python exists in the dense forests of the south-eastern range, having seen specimens killed in adjacent districts; but during my wanderings from 1857 to 1865 in the Seonee jungles I never met with one. The rat snake (*Coryphodon Blumenbachii*) is common, as also a small Dryinus or tree snake. Of the batrachia I find in my notes of 1861 the following:—*Rana tigrina*, *R. Leschenaultii*, *R. flavescens*, *Polypedates leucomystax*, and *Bufo melanostictus*. The tanks contain a species of terrapin (*Emys punctata?*).

I regret I am not sufficiently versed in ichthyology to be able

to state whether or not the waters of Seonee contain anything rare in the way of fishes; but the mahseer (*Barbustor*), sanwul (*Ophiocephalus Maruleus*), rohoo (*Labeo rohita*), and the little chilwah (*Aspidoparia morar*) are the few that occasionally appear on European tables. Brief also, from the same cause, must be my notice of the insects. There are, however, one or two important ones which deserve mention. The tussur silk moth (*Saturnia paphia*) abounds, and the worms are cultivated for the sake of the silk which is woven in the looms of Seonee.

The tussur in its wild state feeds on the sāj (*Pentaptera tomentosa*), lendiya (*Lagerstrœmia parviflora*), and bēr (*Zizyphus jujuba*); but the sāj only is used in the plantations where the cultivated worm is propagated by a class of men called Khewuts, who are usually, by profession, fishermen. They purchase the cocoons in the first instance from the Gonds, and keep them till the moth appears and lays her eggs. The worms when hatched are planted out on stunted sāj trees, and are carefully tended by the Khewut men, who during their watch strictly isolate themselves from their families and live on rice and salt only, an infringement of which custom, they believe, would be followed by disease in the worm. The tussur moth is of large size, the female extending about six inches across the wings, of a delicate fawn colour with large triangular eyes of transparent membrane surrounded by a border of purple in each corner of the wings. The worms are prettily marked on a green ground tint, and are as thick as a finger when full grown.

The next most important insect is that which produces the lac dye and gum (*coccus* sp.). The trees on which this curious little creature deposits the crust which constitutes the stick lac of commerce are the palas (*Butea frondosa*) and the kusum (*Schleichera trijuga*). There is, however, not much trade in stick lac in Seonee; it is more abundant in the adjoining districts of Jubbulpoor, Chindwarra, and Mundla. Some idea of the commerce in this article may be gained from the fact that from one collecting station in the Raipoor district, that of Rajim, from 3,000 to 4,000 bullock loads are annually exported.

I have noticed below the ghâts a species of *Cantharis* much resembling the cantharides fly of the shops, perhaps a little

smaller and of a brighter green, but intensely vesicatory. For blistering purposes, another beetle common in gardens, with barred elytra (*Mylabris* sp.), is frequently used.

I must now devote a brief space to the human inhabitants of the district, dividing them into aborigines and immigrants.

The aborigines are the Gonds; they are a race of stature below medium height, very dark in colour, with Mongolian features, high cheek-bones, wide nostrils and thick lips, straight black hair on the head, but not much on the face.

The women are in comparison finer than the men, being in many cases well-formed and pleasant-looking, if not pretty; often they are cast in quite an Amazonian mould, and a stalwart damsel at times quite eclipses her puny-looking husband. Their costume is simple, consisting of one cloth only, which, encircling the waist in the manner of an ordinary Indian male attire of rather scanty dimensions, is then thrown across the breast and over the left shoulder. The head is left bare, the hair gathered into a knot at the back, rather on one side, into which a gay-coloured flower is frequently fastened in a coquettish manner. The legs, which are bare from the upper part of the thigh downwards, are profusely tattoed with designs in dark blue, and heavy bracelets, bead necklaces, and anklets make up the rest of their attire.

The men are content with a waist-cloth and a wisp of a turban round the head, and all carry a little axe with which they knock over game, cut down trees, build their houses, carve their meat, and even, I believe, shave themselves. Those who are well off have a blanket for wet weather.

As regards their character I will begin by quoting the words of the Rev. Stephen Hislop, who as a missionary worked amongst them for many years, and who, at the time of his sudden and lamented death,[1] left some unfinished notes on the aboriginal tribes which were afterwards ably edited by the Chief Commissioner, Sir Richard Temple. Mr. Hislop says they 'are endowed with an average share of intelligence and a more than ordinary degree of observation. Shy in their intercourse with strangers, they are not wanting in courage when there is an understood object to call it forth. Truthful in their statements,

[1] He was drowned in crossing a swollen stream.

faithful to their promises, and observant of the rights of property among themselves, they nevertheless do not scruple to plunder those to whom they are under no obligation to fidelity. But the great blot on their moral character is their habitual intemperance. Besides their daily potation, a large quantity of liquor is an essential element in their religious rites.'

This is doubtless a deplorable fact, but I am inclined to agree with what Captain H. C. Ward wrote in his report on Mundla, to the effect that Mr. Hislop's statement that 'their acts of worship invariably end in intoxication' is somewhat too sweeping a condemnation.

Al writers, however, are agreed as to their good qualities. Sir Richard Temple says : 'They are honest and truth-telling; they are simple-minded; though superstitious, they are yet free from fanaticism. They have great physical endurance; their courage is remarkable.' Captain Ward writes : 'The Gond in service is exceptionally faithful and obedient to his employer, so much so that he would not hesitate to commit any crime at his orders, and sooner than turn informer would himself die.' But one of the best descriptions of Gondee character is by Colonel Thomson, who describes them as 'very peculiar; timid with strangers. They are personally brave, honest in their dealings, proverbially truthful and faithful, and very tractable; still they are unsettled in disposition, prone to wandering, and apparently void of attachment for places. Thus, then, when well treated and trusted, they make excellent servants for rough work; on the other hand, when they fall amongst bad characters, they are easily led away into joining plundering parties, which they seem to enjoy. In former days they were so much addicted to plunder that an attack by gangs of robbers got to be called a *Gondee*. Silent and suspicious at first, they are easily drawn out if their language be spoken; and they are particularly accessible to a little cajolery. The stolidest old Gond in the field, or his still more stolid and eccentric partner, who would, under ordinary circumstances, if addressed as Gond, answer you with a shake of the head or a muttered "*aha*" (the word used in their parts for "no"), will generally, if addressed as "Thakoor" and "Thakoorani," or "Bhoee" and "Bhoeen," give you some information.'

The Gonds. generally so called, are split up into many tribes, and indeed the aborigines of Gondwana belong to two distinct groups, the Kolarian and Dravidian, which again are subdivided, there being thirteen Kolarian and ten Dravidian tribes, with three doubtful ones attached to each group, making twenty-nine divisions. But there appears to be much uncertainty about these divisions, and in every district one hears of castes not known in other districts; for instance, of the twelve and a half castes of Gonds in Seonee recorded by Mr. Hislop, only the Gond and Panka appear in the Dravidian classification of the report of the Ethnological Committee. Again, Mr. Hislop's memorandum omits the Baiga, who in Seonee represents the Kolarian group.

Their divisions appear to be principally based on the number of gods they worship, some being worshippers of three, others of five, seven, or even twelve gods; in the latter case several Hindoo deities being brought in.

The Pardhans are the bards, and in many cases the priests, of the Gonds, though the Baigas or Bhumias are, *par excellence*, the clergy, and they are reverenced by more than the mere aborigines, but chiefly on account of their reputation for casting the evil eye, being able to assume the form of wild beasts, and various other uncanny practices, which their isolated habits and wild appearance give colour to.

The language of the Kolarian Gonds approximates that of the aborigines of Western Bengal, the Kols and Santhals, whilst there are many points of resemblance between that of the Dravidian Gonds and the Tamil.

There is an interesting paper on the language of the Gonds by Dr. O. Manger, who was civil surgeon of Seonee in 1847, which may be found in the 'Journals of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,' vol. xvi. After giving a vocabulary he says:

Singular nouns form their plural by the addition of *nk*, as

Kora, a horse; *Korank*, horses.
Konda, an ox; *Kondánk*, oxen.
Mura, a cow; *Murank*, cows.

There is nothing to distinguish gender, save that certain females of animals have different names, as

Bilal, a cat ; *Bokal*, a tom-cat.
Yeti, a she-goat ; *Buckral*, a he-goat.
Puddhi, a sow ; *Ikundal*, a boar.

Nouns are thus declined :—

First Declension.

Nom.	*Kora*, a horse ;	*Korank*, horses.
Gen.	*Korana* or *Korada* } of a horse ;	*Korankna*, of horses.
Dat. Acc.	*Korat* or *Koratun* } to a horse ;	*Korankun*, horses.
Ablat.	*Koratsun*, by a horse ;	*Koranksun*, by horses.

Second Declension.

Nom.	*Gohk*, wheat.	No plural.
Gen.	*Gohkna*, of wheat.	
Dat. and Acc.	*Gohkún*, to wheat.	
Ablat.	*Gohksún*, by wheat.	

Third Declension.

Nom.	*Pindi*, otta (flour).	No plural.
Gen.	*Pindina*, of otta.	
Dat. and Acc.	*Pinditún*, to otta.	
Ablat.	*Pinditsún*, by otta.	

PERSONAL PRONOUNS—*Singular.*

Nák or *Nunna*, I.	*Imma*, thou.	*Wur*, he.
Nowa, my.	*Niwa*, thy.	*Wunna*, his.
Nakun, me.	*Nikun*, thee.	*Wunk*, him.
Náksún, by me.	*Niksun*, by thee.	*Wunksun*, by him.

Plural.

Mák, we.	*Imat*, you.	*Wúrg*, they.
Mowan, our.	*Miwan*, your.	*Wurran*, their.
Mákún, us.	*Mekún*, you.	*Wúrrún*, them.
Máksún, by us.	*Miksún*, by you.	*Wurrunsun*, by them.

Demonstrative.	*Interrogative.*	
	Singular.	
Yirg, this.	*Bur*, who.	*Ud*, he, she, it.
Yenna, of this.	*Bona*, whose.	
Yenk, this.	*Bonk*, whom.	*Ten* } him, her, it,
Yenksun, by this.	*Bonsun*, by whom.	*Táne* } them.

Plural.

Yirg, these.	*Búrk*, who.	
Yirran, of these.	*Boran*, of whom.	*Tunna*, his, hers, theirs.
Yirkún, these.	*Bonk*, whom.	
Yirrúnsún, by these.	*Bonsun*, by whom.	

Indefinites.—Bore, someone; *Bara*, something. Singular *Bora*, what? Plural *Barauk*, what?

VERBS.

Imperative.	*Wunka*, speak.
Infinitive.	*Wunkunna*, to speak.
Present part.	*Wunki*, speaking.
Past part.	*Wunktúr*, spoken.
Conjunctive part.	*Wunksi*, having spoken.

Present Tense.	*Imperfect Tense.*
Nunna wunki, I speak.	*Nunna wunkundán*, I was speaking.
Imma wunki, thou speakest.	*Imma wunkundi*, thou wast speaking
Wúr wunki, he speaks.	*Wúr wunkundur*, he was speaking.
Már wunki, we speak.	*Már wunkundúm*, we were speaking.
Imar wunki, ye speak.	*Imar wunkundir*, ye were speaking.
Wúrg wunki, they speak.	*Wúrg wunkundúrg*, they were speaking.

Future Past.

Nunna wunksi howe } &c. Same for all persons.
Imma wunksi howe }

Perfect.

Singular.

Nunna wunktán
Imma wunkti
Wur wunktúr

Plural.

Mar wunktúm
Imar wunktir
Wúrg wunktúrg

Imperative.

Wunka, speak thou.

Wunkar, speak ye.

Pluperfect.

Nunna wunksi
Imma wunksi
&c., the same for all persons } I had spoken, &c.

Future.

Nunna wunkika
Imma wunkiki,
Wúr wunkanúr
Mar wunkíkum
Imar wunkíkir
Wúrg wunkanúrg } I shall speak, &c.

Future Indefinite.

Singular.

Nunna wunkundán howe.
Imma wunkundi howe.
Wúr wunkundur howe.
Már wunkundir howe
Wúrg wunkundúrg howe.

SECOND EXAMPLE OF A VERB.

Jim, beat thou; *jimpt*, beat ye.
Jiána, to beat.
Jitúr, beaten.
Jia, beating.
Jisi, having beaten.

Nunna jia, I am beating.
Nunna jindán, I was beating.
Nunna jitán, I beat.
Nunna jisi, I have beaten.
Nunna jeka, I shall beat.
Nunna jindán howe, I shall be beating.
Nunna jisi howe, I shall have beaten.

Dr. Manger goes on to say that 'the verbs seem to be conjugated alike, whether transitive or intransitive, and to have no passive voice, nor is there anything corresponding to the Hindostani particle *ne*. No aorist tenses or subjunctive mood.' He then gives examples of the Lord's prayer, the Ten Commandments, and an interesting specimen of the songs with which the Gonds are wont to beguile their evenings and the fruitless days of the rainy season. As the legend it contains is curious, I give a short abstract of it in prose.

THE SONG OF SANDSUMJEE.

Sandsumjee married six wives, but had no heir, so he married a seventh and departed on a journey; during his absence, after his relatives had sacrificed to a god, she bare a son Singbaba. The 'small wife was sleeping, the other six were there;' so they took the babe and threw it into the buffalo's stable, placing a puppy by her side, and said, 'Lo! a puppy is born.'

But the buffaloes took care of Singbaba, and poured milk into his mouth.

When the six wives went to look for him, they found Singbaba playing.

Thence they took him and threw him to the cows, but the cows said, 'Let no one hurt him,' and poured milk into his mouth. So when the six wives went to look again whether he was alive or dead, lo! Singbaba was playing.

Thence they took him and threw him into a well, but on the third day when they went to enquire, they found Singbaba still playing. So they took him and threw him on the tigers' path as the tigers were coming, and they heard his cries as they left him. But the tigress felt compassion, and said, 'It is my child;' so she took him to her den, and having weaned her cubs fed Singbaba with milk, and so he grew up with the cubs. To her one day Singbaba said, 'I am naked; I want clothes.' So the tigress went and sat by the market road till muslin and cloth makers came along; on seeing her run at them they dropped their bundles and fled, which she took up and brought to Singbaba, who clothed himself and kissed her feet.

Another day he said, 'Give me a bow.' She again went and waited till a sepoy armed with a bow passed by. She roared and rushed at him, on which he dropped the bow and fled, and she picked it up and brought it to Singbaba, who shot birds with it for his little tiger brothers.

In the meantime Sandsumjee returned home and said, 'Is any one inspired? Has God entered into any one? If so, let him arise.'

Then Singbaba received inspiration, and accompanied by his big and little brothers went. In the midst (of the assembly) was a Brahmin. Him Singbaba required to get up; he refused, whereupon the big brother (tiger) got angry and did eat him up. All asked Singbaba, 'Who are you?'

'Ask the buffaloes,' he replied, telling his little brother to go and call his mother. She came, and the three species were assembled before the people.

'Question them,' said Singbaba. So they asked, 'Who is he?'

First the buffaloes answered, 'Sandsumjee's son,' and they told his history.

Then the cows told how he stayed with them two days, and then was thrown into the well; from thence they knew not where he went.

'Ask my mother,' said Singbaba.

So the tigress told how she weaned her cubs and nourished him, on which all embraced her feet and established her as a god, giving her the six wicked wives. So Singbaba became illustrious, and the tigress was worshipped.

'*Sandsunjee Babana id saka áud,*
Of Sandsunjee Baba this song is,
Bhirri báns bhirri-ta saka áud.
Of Bhirry bamboo jungle Bhirri this song is.'

As the Gonds are divided, in an uncertain sort of way, into various septs or clans, so does their religion, which depends on the number of deities they worship, differ in all parts. Mr. Hislop says: 'Though the Gond pantheon includes about fifteen gods, yet I have never obtained from one individual the names of more than seven deities.' These are pure and simple Gond gods, but the worship of the Hindoo deities, especially of the dread goddess Kali, has crept in wherever the aborigines have mixed with the immigrants.

The chief god is Burra Deo, the Great Spirit, the Manitou of the Red Indian; he is universally accepted by all the tribes. Of the others the best known are Thakoor Deo, a household deity; Ghunsyam Deo, the guardian of the crops; Mata Deo, who requires to be propitiated for disease, especially small-pox; Phursa Pen, the god of war; Bhim Sen, whose origin may be ascribed to the Hindoos, Bhima the Pandoo being one of their great heroes; and, in Seonee, though I do not find him mentioned by other writers, Donger Deo, the lord of the forests, who is worshipped under some tree conspicuous for its size. The minor spirits, good and bad, are numerous; the Bagh Deo is the spirit, usually malignant, of one who has been killed by a tiger, and such a one has to be propitiated by offerings on a rude shrine. In every district certain localities of striking aspect are invested with a guardian 'deo.' The Goorera Deo in the Bān Gunga valley, and the Kookra Deo of the legend given in Chapter IV., are cases in point—they are minor celebrities with only a local fame. The religious ceremonies consist chiefly of sacrifices of pigs, fowls, and mouhwa spirit; and the officiating priests are generally of the Baiga race, and are termed Bhumias or Bhoomkas.

The Baigas arrogate to themselves superiority over the whole of the Gond tribes as being the original sons of the soil, and their language is said to have more of the Sanscrit in it than the ordinary dialects of Gondwana. They usually hold themselves aloof from the ordinary Gonds, and live in the wildest parts,

which assists in maintaining their character for supernatural powers. Some few colonies of them exist in the Seonee district, but more are to be found in the wilds of the adjoining country of Mundla. They have been thus graphically described:[1]— 'Of slight wiry build, they are very hardy, extremely active, and first-rate sportsmen. Cunning in making traps and pitfalls and capital shots with their bows and arrows, they soon clear the whole country of game; persevering to a degree, they never leave the track of blood, and the poison on their arrows is so deadly to the animal struck, that sooner or later it is certain to die. Unarmed save with the axe, they wander about the wildest jungles; and the speed with which they fly up a tree on any alarm of tigers is wonderful; yet the courageous way in which they stand by each other on an emergency shows that they are by no means wanting in boldness. Their skill in the use of the axe is extraordinary, and they often knock over small deer, hares, and peacocks with it. It is indeed by no means rare to see panthers brought in either speared or knocked on the head with the axe.' And again:—'In the rains, when he has little else to do, the Baiga and his companions amuse themselves with running down sambur and spotted deer with their dogs, following them into the water, and killing them with their axes when brought to bay.'

The sorcerers and medicine-men of the Baigas are in great repute in Gondwana, and some of them are supposed to have power over tigers and in the laying of the disturbed spirits of those who have been killed by tigers.

The social ceremonies of the Gond are simple. In marriage it is usual for the bridegroom, unless he can offer a sufficient dower, to serve the bride's father for a term of years, the period of probation commencing about twelve years of age. Though a girl's parents generally dispose of her, she has the right, which is recognised, of refusing their choice and of eloping with another lover, though, according to Captain Ward, it is allowable for the deserted swain to abduct her by force if he has the power, or one of the girl's first cousins may do so, but it is not often attempted unless the family are very much against the match. A Gond may have as many wives as he can afford to keep.

Widows are allowed to remarry, and it is usual for the

[1] 'Central Provinces Gazetteer,' article 'Mandla,' by Captain H. C. Ward

younger brother to take the widow, unless she have a preference for another who is willing to take her. Elder brothers are not, however, allowed to marry widows of younger brothers.

After death the bodies are either burned (which is considered more honourable), or buried with the feet to the north, so that the deceased may more readily tread the path to the happy hunting-grounds of his people, which are said to be somewhere in the direction of the Himalayas.

The spirits of the dead are supposed to haunt certain places, and offerings are made to them. According to Captain Ward, the spirit of the father of a family haunts the house till it is laid; and until that is done by the Baiga priest, a portion of the daily food is set aside for him, and he is the only object of worship for the time.

With the space at my disposal it would be useless for me to attempt more than a very shadowy outline of the history of the Seonee portion of these tribes. Those who wish to know more should study Sleeman's account of the Gurha Mundla dynasty; Hislop's Memoranda; the admirable preface to the 'Central Provinces Gazetteer' by Mr. C. Grant, C.S.; the report of the Central Provinces' Ethnological Committee; and Sir George Campbell's paper on the Dravidian and Kolarian groups in the 'Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,' vol. xxxv.

Their history as a people of importance does not carry us back further than the sixteenth century, when Sungram Sa, of the Gurha Mundla dynasty, became ruler over fifty-two districts; but he, again, traced back his origin to Jadho Rai, a Rajpoot adventurer, who succeeded his father-in-law, a Gond prince, in A.D. 358.[1] The earliest mention of the aborigines we may assume to be that in the 'Ramayana,' where it is stated that the early Aryan settlers or hermits were sadly annoyed by the mockery of the mischievous savages, the 'shapeless and ill-looking monsters,' which terrified the devotees.[2]

It is probable that they were all primitive savages till they were improved by a fusion with the aristocratic Rajpoot blood, which gave an elevation to the chiefs, and through them a superior tone to those who now pride themselves on being Raj-Gonds.

[1] Sleeman. Journal Bengal Asiatic Society, vol. vi.

[2] Grant's Preface.

That Rajpoot chieftains ruled over Gondwana from extremely remote ages is proved by the discovery of inscriptions, one of which, on a metal plate, contained a grant of land from a sovereign of the Haihaibunsee Rajpoot dynasty of Ratunpoor to a Brahmin in Mundla in the Sumvat year 201 (A.D. 144),[1] and a rajah of the same line is mentioned in an inscription in a temple at Chattisgurh, dated A.D. 103. That Seonee itself was under the rule of a Hindoo dynasty as far back as the fifth century seems to be satisfactorily proved by the discovery in the district of a copper plate containing a grant by the reigning prince to his officiating priest, which, when taken in connection with Dr. Bhau Dájí's reading of an inscription in the Ajantha caves, and with certain passages in the 'Puranas,' points to the existence of a Yavana line of princes ruling on the Satpura range, the name of whose founder, Vindhya Sakti, is suggestive of the Puranic term 'Vindhyan,' as applied to what is now known as the Satpura range.[2]

The existence of a ruling race in Seonee of greater civilisation than the aborigines is proved by the ruins of Ghunsore, where there are the débris of forty temples. One can scarcely call them ruins, seeing that hardly one stone on another remains, owing chiefly to the spoliation by the surrounding malgoozars, who for years past have been using the massive blocks, many of them of great size and length, for building purposes. That they were at one time of great importance and beauty is probable from the quantity of exquisite carvings in freestone which have been exhumed. On one occasion, when in the vicinity of Ghunsore, we dug up several cartloads of most admirably chiselled Sevaic and Vishnuite sculpture, which are now deposited in the Nagpoor Museum. I also found there a large Jain idol in a sitting posture, which had been placed under a tree by the people of the place, and worshipped in an ignorant sort of way, the tradition being that the tree was an old dry one which had burst forth into leaf when the god was placed under it. It was approached by the credulous villagers with great awe, under the belief that a gigantic guardian serpent would attack the presumptuous intruder; and great was the wonder when my men deposited it on a cart, and removed it to my camp, without

[1] Sleeman. [2] Grant's Preface.

any such wrathful manifestation on the part of the abducted deity. They, however, begged I would let them have the image again; and so I did, after pointing out to them the folly of putting their trust in a god who was so helpless.

It is a matter of question whether the Gāolee dynasty ever ruled over the Seonee plateau, but below the ghâts, in the Dongertāl talooqa, are found some descendants of that pastoral nation, who keep up the traditional life by being owners and breeders of cattle.

I think we may go at once from the Yavana line to the Gurha Mundla dynasty, in whose history we find the first tradition of the fusion of the blue blood of the Rajpoot with the plebeian stream that flowed in Gondee veins.

It was in the year A.D. 358, when still a Vindhyan king ruled over Seonee, that Jadho Rai, a soldier of fortune in the service of one of the Haihaibunsee sovereigns, accompanied his master on a pilgrimage to the source of the Nerbudda, at Ummerkuntuk. In a dream the goddess Nerbudda appeared to him, and assured him of ultimately attaining sovereign power, instructing him at the same time to go to one Surbhee Partuk, a Brahmin, at Ramnuggur, near Gurha. Jadho Rai quitted his lord's service, and, by the advice of the Brahmin, entered that of the Gond Prince of Gurha, whose only child, a daughter, he married, and succeeded to the throne. The scruples of conscience regarding an alliance with a maiden of inferior caste were allayed by an omen from the gods in the sight of all the people—to wit, the descending of a blue jay, or roller (*Coracias indica*), a bird sacred to Siva, on the head of the favoured successor of the dying rajah, for which purpose—as Sir William Sleeman, from whose account I have abridged this tradition, remarks—it was doubtless ingeniously trained by the young adventurer and his spiritual guide. The throne of Gurha was increased by the addition of Mundla by Gopal Sa, the tenth in succession from Jadho Rai, in the year A.D. 634,[1] and the dynasty thenceforth became what is now termed the Gurha-Mundla line. It was, however, reserved for the forty-eighth prince, Sungram Sa, to raise the family to the proud position of ruler over fifty-two districts, having, it is believed, received

[1] 'Central Provinces Gazetteer,' article 'Mandla,' p. 282.

only three or four from his father; and it is probable that the three districts of Ghunsore, Chownree, and Dongertāl, which now form the district of Seonee, were then brought under the Gurha Mundla rule.

Tradition hath it that Sungram Sa was a very pious prince and an encourager of religious men, one of whom conceived the idea of assassinating him in fulfilment of a vow he had made to offer up the blood of a certain number of sovereigns in sacrifice to Siva.[1] Taking advantage of the superstitious nature of Sungram Sa, he persuaded him that, by the performance of certain secret rites, he might so propitiate the god Bhyroo, to whom he had erected a temple, as to become victorious over all his enemies. Sungram Sa fell into the design, but luckily the suspicions of a favourite servant were aroused, and he warned his master that the Sunyassee priest meant to kill him, and begged to be allowed to accompany him; the prince was brave, and refused, but took the precaution of hiding a sword under his cloak. The Sunyassee instructed him to walk round a cauldron of boiling oil repeating certain prayers, and then to fall prostrate before the god; the prince requested the priest to show him first how the rites should be done, lest he should make a mistake, and, on perceiving that the Sunyassee had a naked sword under his dress, he severed his head from his shoulders, on which the god Bhyroo appeared and promised him victory over all his enemies, which led to the annexation of the country known as Bawungurh, or the Fifty-two Forts. The history of the Gurha Mundla rajahs has much of interest and romance in it, for which I have not space, but must pass on to the time of Narendra Sa, the fifty-seventh prince in succession from Jadho Rai. In the meanwhile the powerful armies of the Mogul emperor had reduced the Gond princes to the state of feudatories. Narendra Sa was for a time deprived of his territories by two insurgent cousins; however, these being ultimately defeated and slain, his authority was re-established, but two of his feudatories, Azim Khan, jaghirdar of Barha, and Londee Khan, soobah or governor of Chownree (Seonee), taking advantage of the unsettled state of the country and their master's weakness, broke out into rebellion, attempting to establish an

independent sovereignty. Narendra Sa, being unable to cope with them single-handed, invited the aid of Bukht Buland, the powerful Rajah of Deogurh, and on the defeat of the rebels assigned to him the three districts of Ghunsore, Chownree and Dongertāl (modern Seonee).

Colonel Thomson relates a tradition, which I also remember, regarding the death of Loondey Khan or Soondey Khan :—'The battle in which he was killed was fought outside Seonee on the lands of Pertapoor, where his head was cut off, but his body is stated to have gone on fighting until he reached his house in Seonee, where he was finally overwhelmed. The people of Seonee firmly believe this story, and point out the two chubootras (masonry platforms) erected, one where his head fell, and the other where he was finally despatched, and have made a kind of peer or saint of him, his shrine being carefully kept and looked after.'

Seonee now became part of the Deogurh kingdom, and probably its prosperity dates from this time (about A.D. 1700). Bukht Buland was a man of liberal views, great energy, and singular administrative ability, and to him may be ascribed the immigration of various classes of Hindoos and Mahomedans, which now form two-thirds of the population, and under whose superior agricultural skill the district rose rapidly into importance. I may now, before treating of these immigrant peoples, hurriedly glance over the subsequent points in the history of the district. The story of Taj Khan, or, as some call him, Raj Khan, as related in Chapter VII. of this volume, is substantially historical as far as relates to the manner in which he won the favour of Bukht Buland, and became talooqdar of Dongertal and conqueror of Sangurhee. In A.D. 1743 Raghojee Bhonsla, the Mahratta ruler, having taken possession of the kingdom of Deogurh, including Seonee, was much pleased with the fidelity of Mahomed Khan, the son of Taj Khan, who held out the fortress of Sangurhee against his troops for a lengthened period, and only surrendered at the command of his lawful master; and he appointed him dewan or governor of what is now the Seonee district.

This Pathan family continued to govern till the time of Zuman Khan, the fourth dewan, who, being indolent and

incapable, was superseded by a Mahratta; and when the district was ceded by the Bhonslah ruler of Nagpoor to the British in 1818 the once powerful Pathan family was found in poverty and disgrace. It was then, as Colonel Thomson observes, 'a most graceful act of recognition on the part of the British Government awarding to Dewan Mahomed Nujeef Khan, the grandson of Mahomed Dhummee Khan (third dewan), and his heirs, the Gondee talooqa in *Oobaree*, in lieu of their hereditary talooqa of Dongertal,[1] and the measure proved a most politic one; for in 1857, instead of turning their influence against us, which, connected as they are with many of the Nagpoor people, they might easily and with much effect have done, they expressed themselves determined to rise or fall with the British Government. The dewan called on me in person immediately after my arrival (which was in June 1857, after the breaking out of the mutinies), and placed himself entirely at my orders, offering active service if required.' Let the 'Gazetteer' furnish the final record of the history of the town of Seonee up to the present time.

'It was founded by Mahomed Amin Khan, who made Seonee his head-quarters instead of Chhapárá. It contains large public gardens, a fine market-place, a noble tank which has recently been improved and deepened. The principal buildings are the court-house, gaol, school-house, dispensary, and post-office. A handsome church is about to be erected.'

Now we must turn back to the settlers introduced by Bukht Buland. At that time the plateau country was inhabited chiefly by the aboriginal Gonds, Purdhans, Mehras, Punkas, and Kutteas, though it is to be supposed that there were colonies also of which some descendants may survive of the followers of the Hindoo rulers who built Ghunsore and other places of superior architecture; but local tradition invariably assigns to Bukht Buland the credit of introducing the foreign element in the population. In his day the Lodhees, Aheers, and Rajpoots of the northern portion came in from the westward, whilst from other parts, chiefly south and east, came in a stream of Bagrees, Kerars, Koormees, and Ponwars, and they speedily monopolised the best parts of the country, driving the abori-

[1] The Gondee talooqa comprises some of the best land, and is, therefore, more valuable than Dongertal.

gines more and more into the jungles and to the sterile north. It was natural, too, that the Pathans should follow in the wake of their successful leader, Taj Khan, and under him acquire much landed property of the best sort; they number now about 14,000 strong, and are successful cultivators and the chief employers of the aboriginal Gonds, with whom they get on well.

The Ponwars are, however, the most important class, both numerically and as excellent agriculturists. They are notoriously untrustworthy; shifty, and litigious, but energetic and enterprising, and are most skilful practical farmers. They are a good-looking race, tall and fair, having a high-caste Brahminical appearance, and their women are frequently very handsome. They are descended from the Pramaras of Dhar in Malwa, a Rajpoot-Khettree race, whose royal house furnished at one time rulers both in Jubbulpoor and Nagpoor on either side of the plateau. Of the other settlers, 'the most remarkable classes among the landholding community are the Lodhees, Aheers, Rajpoots, and Pathans. The first three are generally stalwart and fine-looking, and are dressed much in the same style—the long wadded green angurkha. They are all much alike in appearance; the Aheers are perhaps the finer-looking; they have all blunt, rough manners, and are reputed turbulent, but I have always found them well-disposed and easy enough to deal with.'[1]

The Lodhees in all probability immigrated from Bundlecund, though there are Lodhees in the southern part of the district who so far differ from their northern brethren, and resemble more the Ponwars, as to lead to the supposition that they are descendants of older colonies settled to the south of the range. The Aheers may be classed as being of the Gaolee race, who came into the north through Chindwarra, whilst the southern Gaolees of Dongertal are settlers of an earlier date when Gaolee kings ruled over Nagpoor.

The Gwaras deserve passing notice; they are a low-caste race of the Gaolee type, chiefly entertained as farm servants and ploughmen; they are excessively hardy, and are reputed trustworthy. Colonel Thomson says of them: 'I have seen one of

[1] Colonel Thomson's Report.

them run with a malgoozar's "kacchar" (a rough sort of gig drawn by trotting bullocks) twenty-five to thirty miles, and at the end lie down to sleep satisfied with a pinch of tobacco to allay the cravings of hunger until he could get his *peeh*, or rice gruel.'

I must not conclude this sketch without a brief allusion to the architectural remains left by the people who, from time to time, have played a part in the history of the district.

The oldest forms of human erections are the cromlechs mentioned in page 130 of this volume.

These are supposed to be Indo-Scythic, and they resemble in a striking degree the Scythian remains of Europe. But I must not venture now on lengthy remarks on the theory of the great tides of emigration which, setting north and south from the plateaux of Central Asia, carried with them the customs which left traces of identity in regions so far apart as Northern Europe and the Indian peninsula—traces not only in such monuments as these cromlechs and cycloliths, but in implements of stone, roots of words, and traditions.

Throughout the Central Provinces down to the banks of the Godavery river, these cromlechs may be found, and numbers of celts, axes, and well-shaped stone implements, identical in form with those of Europe, have been discovered in various places.

The ruins of Ghunsore, to which I have already alluded, appear to be the next in order of antiquity, and then come the forts of the Raj-Gond dynasty. The aboriginal Gonds have but little to show of architecture; as may be expected of a people whose worship is of a primitive and sylvan character, their remains, instead of temples and altars, take the practical form of fortresses. Of these there are several in Seonee on commanding positions along the south-eastern face of the range; they can hardly be called specimens of aboriginal skill, for whatever there is about them of excellence has been borrowed from the more civilised Rajpoots. In most cases these so-called forts are nothing but natural fastnesses, an isolated rock or projecting spur, in which the existing difficulties of access have been augmented by barriers of stonework. The masonry in parts is of the most solid description, being cubes of granite fastened by iron clamps. No doubt in olden

days they were almost impregnable, but they would be useless against modern artillery. Such are the forts of Bhainsagurh, Pertabgurh, Umargurh, and Kohurgurh on the south-eastern range, and Amodagurh on the banks of the Hirrie. The Mahomedan rulers have left but insignificant remains in the two forts of Dongertal and Chuppara; they are probably not more than 150 years old, and are both in ruins.

The present government is leaving its mark more beneficially in the peaceful form of well-made roads and noble bridges, and one of the most lasting monuments will be the handsome stone ghaut, or flight of steps, which extends across the southern end of the Dul Sagur tank, at one time a reedy swamp; it was built by Colonel Thomson, the extensive ruins of Ghunsore furnishing most of the enormous blocks of stone used in its construction.

NOTES.

Chapter II.

Page 69. *The Man-eater.*

This incident occurred, just as it is related, to a friend, the late Lieutenant-Colonel (then Captain) R. Tait, of the Madras army, who was with us for a short time in Seonee. My brother-in-law helped him to recover the wounded tiger.

Chapter III.

Page 100. *The Lalla.*

My old shikaree Moula, or 'the Lalla,' as he was generally called, has already been introduced to the English public by Captain J. Forsyth, and his account of him is very true as to his character, though incorrect as regards his history. The Lalla was never in Upper India; he was a native of Sasseram, in Bengal (Behar), and when, during the Indian Mutiny, I was sent there to take charge of the Sasseram levy, he came into my service with one or two others, and I took him with me to the Central Provinces; in fact, his history is told by me in the character of Fordham in Chapter III. of this volume. On my departure for England on leave of absence, I got my friend Colonel G. F. Pearson, Conservator of Forests, to take my follower under his protection, and he then passed into the care of Captain Forsyth, who officiated for a time as Conservator during Colonel Pearson's absence, and was with him when he met his fate.

Captain Forsyth says of him:

'A really first-class tiger shikari is extremely rare. The combination of qualities required to make him is seldom found in a native. I shall best explain what he should be by describing the Lalla. And first as to his name. "Lalla" means in Upper India a clerk of the Kayat caste, to which our friend belonged; so that, though utterly ignorant of all letters save those imprinted on a

sandy ravine bed by a tiger's paw, he was nicknamed the Lalla by the people, and thereupon his real name disappeared for ever; and, when he was afterwards killed by a tiger, no one had any idea what it was.

'He was a little wee man, so insignificant and so dried and shrivelled up that, as he used to say, "No tiger would ever think of eating me." His early training had made him exceedingly keen of eyesight and in reading the signs of the forest, while in his many wanderings he had accumulated a store of legends of demons and devilry, and a wild jumble of Hindu mythology, that never failed, when retailed over a fire at night to a circle of gaping cowherds and village shikaris, to unlock every secret of the neighbourhood in the matter of tigers. Such an oily cozener of reticent Gonds never existed. Then, miserable as he looked, he could walk about all day and every day for a week in a broiling sun, hunting up tracks, with nothing but the thinnest of muslin skull-caps on his hard nut of a head, and would fearlessly penetrate into the very lair of a tiger perfectly unarmed. He had a particular beaming look, which he always wore on his ugly face when he had actually seen, or, as he said, "salaamed to," a tiger comfortably disposed of for the day; and in late years, when I had to leave all the arrangements to him, I hardly recollect ever going out when he reported the find a likely one without at least seeing the game. He could shoot a little, say a pot shot at a bird on a branch at twenty paces, and kept guns in beautiful order. But he soon came to utterly despise and contemn everything except tiger hunting, for which he had, I believe, really an absorbing passion. Even bison hunting he looked down on as a sport not fit for a gentleman to pursue. For ten months in the year he moped about looking utterly wretched, and taking no interest in anything but the elephant and rifles, and woke up again only on April 1, opposite which date "Tiger shooting commences" will be entered in the Indian almanac of the future, when the royal animal shall be preserved in the reserved forests of Central India to furnish sport for the nobility of the land! Poor old Lalla! He fell a victim in the end to contempt of tigers, bred of undue familiarity. I was very ill with fever in the June of 1866, and meditating a trip home, and had sent out the Lalla with a double gun to shoot some birds for their feathers with a view to salmon flies. He came upon the tracks of a tiger, and, contrary to all orders, tied out a calf at night as a bait, and sat over it in a tree with a gun. The tigress came and received his bullet in the thigh, going off wounded into a very thick cover in the bed of a river. The plucky but foolish

Lalla followed her in there the next morning by the blood, but soon found that tracking up a wounded tiger with a gun is a very different thing from following about uninjured tigers without intent to disturb them. Before he had gone a dozen paces the tigress was upon him, his unfired gun dashed from his hands, and buried for half its length in the sand, his turban cuffed from his head to the top of a high tree by a stroke of her paw that narrowly missed his head, and himself down below the furious beast, and being slowly chewed from shoulder to ankle. He was brought in a dozen miles to Khandwa, where I was, by some men who had gone in for him when the tigress left him. The fire of delirium was then in his eye, and he raved of the tiger's form passing before him red and bloody. But he recognised me when I came to him, and conjured me to go out forthwith and bring in her body next day if I wished to see him live. I knew that the natives have a superstition to this effect, and, though I was then in a high fever, I sent off my elephant at midnight to a village near the spot, following myself on horseback at daybreak. Much rain had fallen, and all old tracks were obliterated. The jungle was also very green and thick, and I spent the whole day till the afternoon hunting, as I afterwards found, in a wrong direction. At last I came on a fresh trail, with one hind foot dragging in the sand, and then I knew I was near the savage brute. We ran it up to a dense *jámun* cover in the river-bed, and I had barely time to get the people on foot safely up trees when the tigress came at me in the most determined manner. She looked just like a huge cat that had been hunted by dogs; her fur all bedraggled and standing on end, eyes glaring with fury, and emitting the hoarse coughing roar of a charging tiger that no one, to the very close of his tiger shooting, hears without a certain quickening of the blood. The first two shots hit fair, but did not stop her, and she was not more than a few yards from the elephant's trunk when the third ball caught her clean in the mouth, knocking out one of her canine teeth, and passing down the throat into the chest. She could do no more, but lay roaring and worrying her own paws till I put an end to her with another shot in the head. She was a lean greyhound-made brute, scarcely bigger than a panther. The Lalla was avenged, but the poor fellow was beyond any help that the sight of his enemy might have afforded him, and notwithstanding every cure—for he was the favourite of everybody who knew him—he sank under the exhausting drain of so many fearful wounds.'[1] No one regretted his death more than I did, for I was in some measure

[1] 'Highlands of Central India,' pp. 279–282.

responsible for having given him a turn for the shikaree's life by taking him away from the peaceful avocation of a Bengal bird-catcher and making him what he was.

Chapter IV.

Page 130. *Cromlechs.*

The account here given of these curious remains has appeared once before with its legend in an amateur magazine which was started in Calcutta, and which, like most Indian periodicals, flourished awhile, but, lacking moisture, withered away. The article was written with a view to connect these remains intimately with those of Northern Europe by giving examples of coincident superstitions which have descended from those misty ages by the traditions handed down from generation to generation.

Chapter V.

Page 145. *Bunsee Lall Abheer Chund Rai Bahadoor,*

A wealthy banker and honorary magistrate, is an example of what energy and intelligence will do for men of whatsoever nation they may be. Still more honourable is it when wealth and distinction arise from loyalty to the State. Bunsee Lall, untitled, as when I first knew him, in the perilous times of the great Indian Mutiny, espoused the cause of the Government, not without risk to himself had the day gone against us. With the capital at his command he was enabled to furnish large supplies of grain for the troops in the field. Whilst other natives were eagerly getting rid of the depreciated Government paper, Bunsee Lall, firm in his conviction of our ultimate success, bought in. The result was great and well-earned wealth. Then came honours; he was made a Rai Bahadoor in consideration of his services, a title of great distinction, with a gift from the Crown of a golden armlet and shawls. Subsequently he was created an Honorary Magistrate of the First Class and member of the Municipal Committee of Kamptee; held various offices in the collecting of customs and octroi; was a commissioner appointed by the Government of Bengal, in 1873, for supplying food to the famine-stricken provinces; and has lately been an honoured guest at the great Durbars held by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales at Agra, and by the Viceroy at Delhi, on the proclamation of Her Majesty as Empress of India, on which occasion he was presented with a medal.

Page 156. *'Without doubt a tiger has carried it off.'*

This actually occurred to my brother (R. Craufuird Sterndale), who went out one evening after dinner to Barelipār, shot a stag, and had it carried off by a tiger in the manner described.

Page 177. '*The brute rushed out from under this very bush.*'

This was one of the nearest shaves I ever had, and happened to me in June 1860 at Paladown, on the banks of the Pench river. The tiger was killed about ten days afterwards by Colonel G. F. Pearson and myself, and his temper may be seen by the account of the fighting tiger at Noni, for that was the animal. He was noted in that part of the country as a *muggra-walla* (a cross-grained brute); so, on the whole, I had reason for congratulation on his forbearance.

Chapter VI.

Page 201.

A bullock is of great assistance in approaching antelope in open country; they are so accustomed to see villagers with their cattle, that anyone with an ox can get well within shot. The native shikarees and antelope snarers are so well aware of this, that they use specially trained bullocks, which are taught to go to the right or left or to stop by pressure of a finger on the back. During the mutiny I became possessor of a very handsome little Brahminy bull, which I afterwards trained to stalk antelope. As Tommy had received his 'baptism of fire' (having been 'looted' at Banda), he stood a solitary shot across his back with supreme indifference, and I often rested my rifle over his sturdy little shoulders. I got him in this manner. Marching one day in rear of a regiment of Madras troops, which, as usual, had a numerous train of camp followers, I noticed a very handsome little bull of a peculiar colour, brown, with black hump and head, bearing a load quite as big as himself—for 'Tommy,' when mounted by an ordinary-sized person, could hardly keep his rider's toes off the ground—a miscellaneous pile of rags and sticks, pots and pans, old hookahs, and bundles, which made a pyramid, the apex of which was crowned by a squalling baby; and under this he was trotting along so cheerfully that I was quite taken with him, and, addressing the tatterdemalion of an owner, who, with a ragged wife and dusty urchins, was goading him on, I asked if he would sell him; but no, he was proof against offers. How was he to get on if he had no means of carriage? Money was no good unless he could get a substitute for his bullock. So I gave up for the time, and deputed a man to watch my dusky friend, and when he was encamped for the day to bring him to me. Accordingly, at noon, he made his appearance, and a bargain was struck to our mutual satisfaction, he going off with a stout country pony worth twice as much as the bullock, and master Tommy came into my possession and lived in clover.

Page 215. *Tiger Hunt in the Suburbs of Seonee.*

This happened, just as it is described, in 1864. The party consisted of Colonel Thomson and Captain Forsyth on the former's elephant, myself and Captain C. Plowden on Bussunta, and Dr. Roberts on the roof of the hut.

Chapter VII.

Page 227. *The Rookhur Man-eater.*

This tiger held his own for many years, being exceedingly wary and favoured by the natural difficulties of the ground. I am told he was at last shot in extreme old age by Mr. J. Nichols, of the Bengal Civil Service.

Chapter X.

Page 337. *Elephantine Dentistry.*

I believe my brother-in-law, Colonel Thomson, still possesses the piece of the tooth which was cut out on this occasion. He used it for some time as a paper weight. Both the doctor and the patient were in his service.

Chapter XI.

Page 370. *The Man-eating Panther of Kahani.*

The story of this extraordinary man-eater is faithfully told in the text, but the time of his career was from 1857 to 1860. He began by carrying off a follower of the Thakoor of Goorwarra, Dhooma, on whom we were keeping a watch during the trou times of the mutiny. Colonel Thomson and I went afte under the supposition that it was a tiger that had kill[ed] th[e] and he came out three times before us in the manner rel[ated] Fordham. I left Seonee for two years to take a more act[ive] in the suppression of the revolt, and on my return in 185[9] that the panther had become the most dreaded man-eat[er] district. Every sportsman in the vicinity had done his b[est] him, but without success, and I tried most energetically [for] but with no better luck. He was afterwards killed by [a] a native who hardly knew what he was firing at; a[nd] which was a beautifully glossy one—quite disproving that confirmed man-eaters get mangy—now peacefully London drawing-room.

Tendua. A panther.
Thanadar. An inspector of police in charge of a *thana* or station.
Tiffin. Lunch.
Tola. A small hamlet.
Toofān. A storm or tempest.
Tukdeer. Fate.
Tulwar. A scimitar.
Wah! An exclamation of astonishment.
Wurbagool. A flying-fox.
Zenana. Women's apartments, a harem.
Zumboorka. A shorter weapon than a *ginjal*, but of larger calibre.

Elephant Language.

Bhirree. Let go.
Bhutt. Sit down.
Dhur. Lift, or lay hold.
Dhutt. Step back.
Dug. Step over.
Maeel. Get up.
Taie. Turn round.
Taie-dhutt. Back and turn.

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SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
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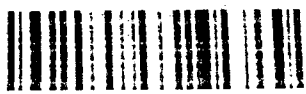
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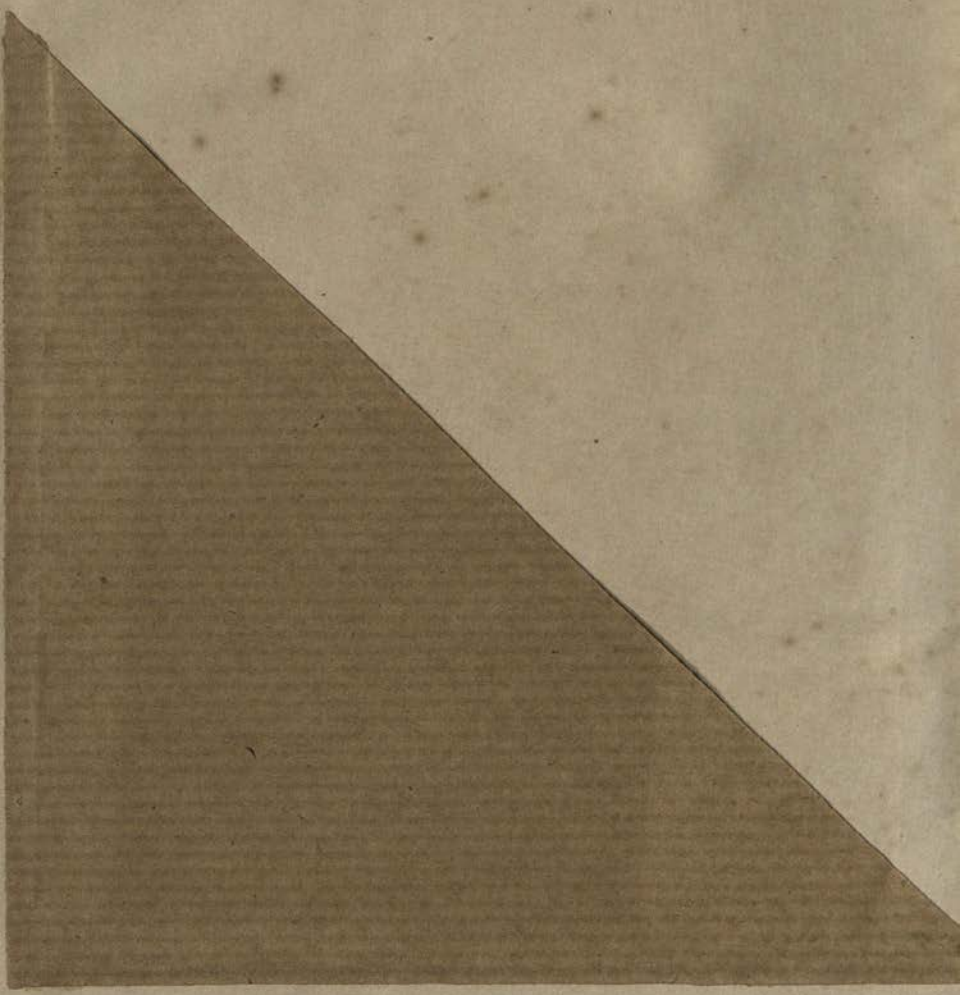
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